

SHOE and STOCKING
STORIES
by
ELINOR MORDAUNT



*Historical
Children's Books*

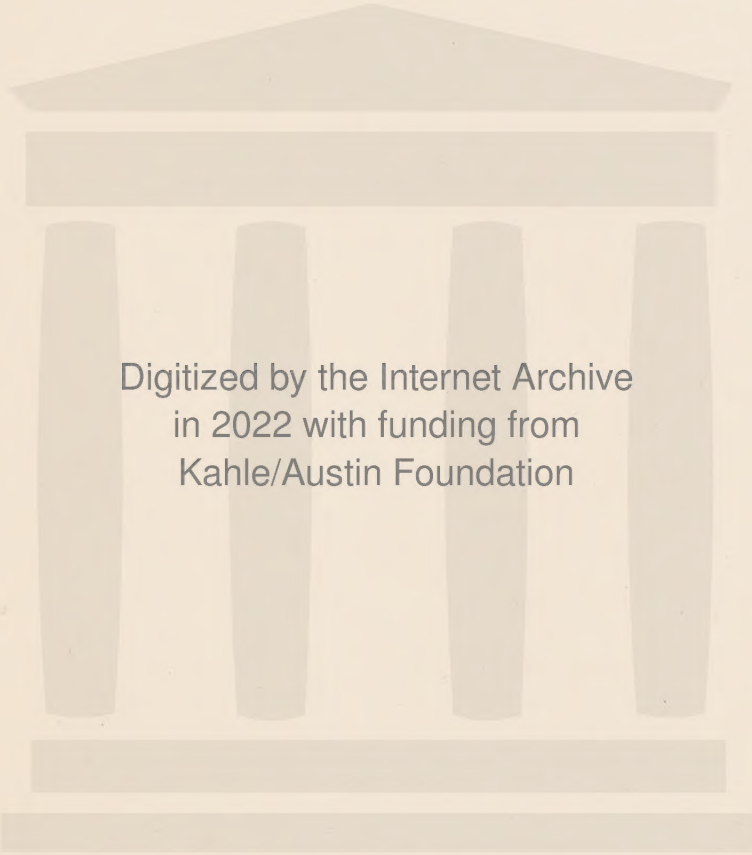
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**SHOE AND STOCKING
STORIES**



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"WHICH WILL YOU CHOOSE?" ASKED THE KING

(The Silver Fish—Page 17)

SHOE and STOCKING STORIES

by ELINOR MORDAUNT

Illustrated by HAROLD SICHEL



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PREFACE

I suppose you want to know why these stories are called by such a very odd name—"Shoe and Stocking Stories." Well, that is what they literally are. I think a boy—a great boy—of five ought to be able to put on his own shoes and stockings, don't you? Well, Godfrey thought he couldn't in a really "No-he-wouldn't" way, and made such a fuss over it each morning, that I began telling him stories—when he did it nicely, like a good boy—for, of course, my story was spoilt if I had to keep on stopping it to say, "*Do* make haste, do go on. No, *not that* foot. Oh, Godfrey! will you never be ready!" The plan was a great success; I almost forgot how to say, "Oh, *do* go on," for, if he stopped, I stopped, and that was quite enough. All these stories were told in that way, while I was employed at the same time in "doing my hair." Several of them took two or three mornings to tell, though, of course, there was more time if it were ever boots with laces instead of shoes to be put on; and each story was told many times. "The Boy Who Went Ogre Shooting" was always the favourite. All sorts of bits were added at special request, like the sen-

tence, "And the Cat too," at the end of the "Bubble Story," for, of course, everyone would want to know what became of the Cat—that's the fault in so many stories, people mention cats and people, and then seem to completely forget about them. E. M.

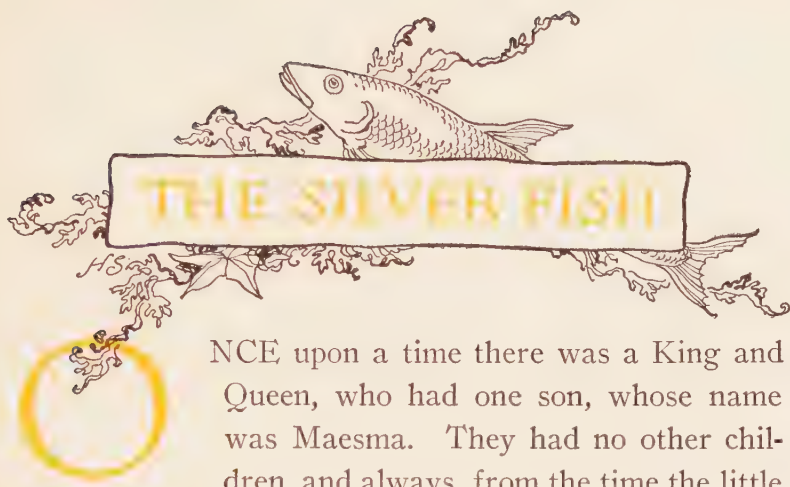
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THE SILVER FISH



ONCE upon a time there was a King and Queen, who had one son, whose name was Maesma. They had no other children, and always, from the time the little Prince could toddle, he went alone his own way; and cared not for playmates or games or fondling, but only to wander out, staggering on his small, fat legs, through the meadows to the river side, where his nurse would hold him by the tail of his little frock so that he might peer over the bank and watch the running water and the fish that swam in it.

Even when he grew up he loved the river better than anything else, and would take his fishing rod and a book in his hand and sit on the bank whole days together—not that he caught much, but the fishing rod was just an excuse for his being there at all.

One warm summer's day, as he sat thus, and no single fish rose to his bait, he tried to read; but the wind shook the boughs over his head, and the sunshine and

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shadow danced so over the page that he just shut his eyes to rest, and so fell fast asleep.

He was awakened by a tug at his line, so violent that he flung his arm round the trunk of the tree against which he was sitting, to prevent himself from being pulled into the water. There was not a doubt that a very large fish was on his line, for all round the water was churned up like soapsuds, and there was such a splashing and plunging that the water was dashed right up, even into his face.

Well, the young Prince pulled and the fish pulled—a giant salmon, splendid in his silver armour, as he dashed and leapt through the water. At last one leap mightier than any other jerked the Prince's arm around the tree—another and he was half down the bank—another, for he would not let go, and he was in the river itself.

Then began the wildest, maddest rush through the water, down the stream, down the river which widened as it went, and shouted and roared past the mills and flew under the bridges, and dashed round the corners; while so great was the speed, between the rushing river and the pull of the great fish, which cut like a silver knife through the water, that at times the Prince was jerked high out of the water, then dragged deep, deep under, and crushed and bruised at every corner which they rounded. But still he held on, because, you see, he was a Prince—and Princes, he knew, must not give in.

At last he heard a great, roaring sound, and he knew it was the sea, and the water began to taste bitter against his lips, and the silver fish plunged with a new movement through the water. Then a great wave passed over his head, and for a time he knew no more.

When he opened his eyes he was in a pale-green world, lighted by a pale light which seemed to come from nowhere in particular. He was lying on a floor of sand, and feeling so old, and tired, and dizzy, that it took him some time to notice anything, apart from the strange green light that seemed neither daylight nor moonlight. But after a little he saw that he must be under the sea. For all around swam great-eyed fish, and delicate pink and green weeds swayed in the water—which was bitter and salt against his lips.

Then he found that he still held the rod in his hand, and next he saw the great salmon, lying on its side panting, with blood about its mouth, and four other salmon, only a little less in size, were round it. And he saw that the big salmon had a crown upon its head and knew it to be the king of the fish. And he heard them speak together, and he understood what they said, how they had cut the line with the blade of the swordfish, but could not get out the hook from the mouth of the king. So the Prince moved towards them, walking slowly because of the strange weight of water round him, and

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put his hand in the salmon's mouth and pulled out the hook.

Then the fish king thanked him, and told him that the other four were his wife and his daughters, Rose Tint, Silver Fin, and Speckle Back; and made the Prince welcome to his kingdom beneath the sea with many courteous words.

For a long time Prince Maesma stayed with the king and his daughters, and ate strange, strange sea food, and slept on a bed of coral strewn with sea weeds, and swam as they did, here, there, and anywhere, just as he wished.

But after a little time he tired of the green sea world, and the strange sea food, and the talk of the sea folk, and longed to be up in the warm sunshine again, among his own people, and so he asked the king to let him go.

"Yes," answered the King, "you shall go, but seeing that I gave you your life, with the power to breathe beneath the water, which otherwise would have drowned you, you must grant me one wish before you go."

"Willingly," answered the Prince. "Whatever you ask me I will grant."

"Then," answered the Fish King, "I would that you should take one of my daughters back to your kingdom with you as your wife."

"Now," thought the Prince, "what shall I do with a

fish for a wife?" But because he had given his word, and a Prince must never break that—though he may break windows when he is young and hearts when he is older—he agreed.

"Which will you choose?" asked the King, and brought his three daughters before him.

Now Rose Tint was very beautiful, flushed all over as if a pink rose were reflected in a silver mirror, and Silver Fin had wide fins like ruffles of the finest silver lace; only the youngest daughter was small and plain, her dull silver coat freckled over with brown spots. Yet, as the three daughters of the King came before Prince Maesma, she looked at him closely with eyes that were human, full of longing and unutterable wishes, and deep far-back thoughts; and because of this he chose her for his wife, and they were married.

The King and the Queen and Rose Tint and Silver Fin swam with the young couple to the mouth of the river, but further they could not go because it was past the season of the year when they cared to swim in the fresh water, so there they took leave of the Princess, with many tears which turned to pearls as they fell, and returned to their sea palace, leaving them to go alone on their way.

Now when Prince Maesma reached that part of the river that was nearest to his Father's Palace he climbed

out, and turning round saw Speckle Back still in the water, for she was unable to mount the steep bank.

“Now,” thought he, “she is unable to get out from the water unless I myself draw her forth. Shall I leave her—for everyone will laugh at me when I come home with a fish for a wife—and go on my way by myself? She will come to no harm, for she has only to swim back again to her own people and her own home.”

But at this thought he looked down and saw his wife’s eyes, which were the eyes of a human being, full of wistful sadness and longing, and was ashamed of such a thought, for was she not his wife? So he bent down and lifted her out of the water, and carried her in his arms, tenderly, up to the palace.

“Kind friend, dear husband,” she murmured, as she lay against his heart; “surely you shall be rewarded.” And the Prince loved her because she was his, and because he faced laughter and scorn for her sake.

When they neared the palace, the one that watched always on the tower blew a great horn three times, which was only done when the son of the King drew near, so that his parents knew who it was that approached, and ran to meet him, and his mother kissed him again and again, but his father spoke gruffly to him as is the way of old men when they are glad to

tears. And all the courtiers crowded round with laughter and with cries of joy.

Then the Queen asked, drawing a little away from her son's arm, "But why do you carry that great fish, my dear heart; let Quetto carry it to the cook, that we may have it to honour thy return for dinner this night."

The Prince felt his cheeks flame, but he spoke bravely and loudly:

"Father, Mother, and People, this fish is my wife, the Princess Speckle Back."

Then all the courtiers laughed and cheered, thinking he could not be in earnest. But his parents knew their son better.

"How comes this?" asked the King.

"Because of my word which I gave," answered the lad; and both his parents replied at once:

"It is well," and questioned him no more; though his mother kissed him afresh with tears, and they gave the new Princess welcome and ordered rooms to be prepared for her and their son, and gave her all courtesy and honour. Only those among the outer ring of the courtiers dared to titter, and there was a raising of eyebrows and curling of lips among the ladies of the court.

Now when the Prince and Princess were in their own rooms, the young husband ordered a dressmaker

to be sent for, and when she came he said: "I wish you to make a dress for my wife, of the finest silver tissue, with foam of white lace, very fine and oversewn with pearls. Are you able for it?"

"Surely," answered the dressmaker; "a robe fit for any Princess." Yet when he brought his wife in his arms, she gaped at him, then laughed outright, and ran laughing from the room.

Then the Prince sent for a second dressmaker, and she too was very sure of her capability to make a robe fit for anyone, till she saw the Princess, when she fell laughing also, so loudly that the Ladies appointed to wait upon the royal fish had to drive her from the room.

And the Prince grew very white with anger, but he said nothing; only caused another dressmaker to be summoned, a quiet, humble little person who was not used to court ways, and when the Prince asked her if she could make such and such a robe of silver and pearls, she answered only: "I will try." And when he brought the fish she did not laugh or change her colour at all but measured her carefully for the gown, enquiring quietly of the shape and length and style.

"Husband, dear Husband," asked the Princess, "I pray let me keep this seamstress always near me, for mine own woman." And the ladies were astounded, for they had not known that she could speak, but the little dressmaker showed no surprise, only her kind eyes

were full of love and pity and tenderness. So she stayed with the Princess, and cared for her always, and sewed her the fine robe of silver and pearls and foaming lace very cunningly, and many other robes besides she sewed for her.

Now there were three pools in the Royal gardens, one near to the palace round which grew lilies, and one further girdled with roses, and a furthest shadowed only by great green trees, and in this pool the Princess loved to lie, and to swim, to lurk under the broad lily leaves and leap in the dappled sunshine, away from all the noise and glitter of the court where, in spite of all her husband's love and his parents' loyalty, she felt herself scorned and served with sullenness and mockery.

One day it happened that many other Kings and Princes came to the palace for a great hunt which was to be held in the woods near by.

"I will not go," said Prince Maesma, "for you might come to some harm all alone here, and my heart is with you."

"No, but you must go," urged the Princess. "I will not have them think that you have lost all manhood by taking me to wife." And she pleaded with him so that he agreed that he would go.

"I will carry you to your own room first," he said. But she answered, "No," let him take her to the third

pool and then would she be happy and at ease waiting his coming.

So he carried her, neither of them thinking of telling Annice, her faithful maid, who sat sewing in an upper room, what they had done, for they were young, and, loving each other, thought only of each other, which was wrong; while Annice, believing that they were together, was content that her mistress was safe, so sat on sewing.

Now in the kitchen there was a great turmoil and confusion, for all the royal hunters and their gentlemen in waiting and attendants were to come back to a feast in the palace that evening, and there was so much work to do that the head cook had to send out to the neighbours to beg for their servants to come to the palace to help him.

One, a great lumbering fellow, fit for nothing but messages, was sent hither and thither till in the turmoil he lost the small amount of wit which he was possessed of.

Just as all should have been nearly ready, the cook found that not enough fish had been sent, and packed off this lout to draw some out of the pools in the garden where they were kept for that purpose, only the third pond having been emptied of all others for the Princess.

“Go to the first pool or the second,” commanded the cook, “but by no means to the third.”

And because the lout was a lout he lost his way, and wandered so that he got to the third pool first.

"The cook said there were plenty of fish," he thought, "and yet I see but one, yet such a big fellow, methinks he must have swallowed all the others, and will suffice to fill the place of the three or four that he bade me bring." And so he reached to draw out the fish, who was in truth the Princess herself.

But the Princess was too frightened to be easily caught, but swam and darted and leapt so that the lout had to wade right into the water to seize her, and even then lost much time in the chase, so that he was frightened into running back as fast as he could, grasping her tightly, to the kitchen.

Now the Princess could not speak except to her husband, therefore she could not ask him to let her go; only she looked at him with such sad, human eyes that in spite of his haste, he was touched with pity and the tears ran down his own cheeks, so that he was glad to hand her over to the scullion who prepared the fish for cooking, and be rid at once of his trouble and his load. Now the scullion was a stranger also, and knew nothing of the Princess, and was in too great a haste even to see her tears, but laid her on the block, ready to cut her head off, and would have done it, too, but his knife was blunt and required sharpening and the

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whetstone was mislaid, so that he lost some time in searching for it.

Meanwhile the Prince had come home, and, leaping from his horse, not even waiting to make his guests welcome, ran off to the pool, followed by his servant, Quetto, to see his wife. Finding the pool empty and all the grass round it trampled, he was in great sorrow, thinking that she had been stolen. Only Quetto, who was so hungry after the hunt that his first thought was of the kitchen, said that perhaps by some evil chance she had been taken there, and so they ran, across the garden, over the flower beds, up the stone steps, scattering the waiting guests to right and left, through the great hall and the buttery and the pantry, to the kitchen—arriving there just as the scullion, having finished sharpening his knife, raised it, and, before they could stop him, had cut off with one stroke the head of the poor, poor Princess.

The Prince was in great grief, and he called for his father and mother, who had shown her all courtesy, but first for Annice, who had loved her, and they wrapped her in a fine veil of silver, having laid her head to her body, and the young husband carried her and laid her on his own bed, and shut his door. And the guests went to their own homes and great candles were lighted in every room of the Palace, and there was weeping and wailing for the Prince's wife, though

some laughed and winked at one another behind their handkerchiefs. Only the Prince and Annice—he within the closed door and she without—grieved with sincerity, and with no thought of duty.

And the Prince wept and wept over his wife, till the silver veil in which she was wrapped was salt with tears. And at last he wept himself to sleep.

Then the moon began to rise, until it looked into the window where the Fish Princess lay in her tear-wet veil of silver. And the veil stirred and moved, and smoothed out to its uttermost, then seemed to grow greater in curves and soft folds, till it appeared to enwrap a human figure, which rose, while the upper part of the veil was shaken back, and hair and a face were shown—the most beautiful in all the world—hair like gold that is mirrored in silver, and eyes like bluebells when the dew is upon them, and a mouth all of sweetness and love, which bent to the Prince's mouth and lay upon it.

Then the Prince awoke, and was in great surprise at seeing so fair a Lady enfolded in his veil of silver. She told him she was his wife, and how she and her father, who was a king, and her mother and her sisters had been enchanted and bound into the form of fishes till some mortal man should weep tears of love and longing above one of them; and how that was why she had been given to the Prince for a wife—while not only

she, but her father, her mother and her sisters were now all alike free.

Then they kissed again, and opened their chamber door and passed out and spoke to the faithful Annice, and passed on to the great hall where the candles burned and the King and Queen were mourning so that they could not mourn any more, and all the courtiers were in their robes of black. Then there was great rejoicing and laughter and tears of joy.

Then, as they took pleasure together, up from the river came the sound of silver trumpets, and they ran to the great steps, and gathering there, saw in the moonlight a barque of silver drawn by many white-plumed swans, and, passing down to the landing place as it drew up, perceived a noble man with a crown upon his head, and a lady also crowned, and two maidens all in tissue of silver and very beautiful to look upon, only less beautiful than the Princess, who met them as they stepped to the shore, crying:

“My father! My mother! My sisters! My mother! My dear, dear mother!” And so embraced them many times.

Then the night passed, and the sun rose, and the bells rang, and the guests that had departed so sadly the night before returned, and—and—ah! how I wish I were there too!



THE ENCHANTED WOODS



Making such enchanting music that his sheep all followed close
on his heels



ARL had been out all day tending the sheep. His clothes which lay on the chair at the foot of his bed were wet and muddy; there was no one to dry them or brush them, or mend up the holes that the brambles had torn day after day.

It had rained without ceasing, and the wind had seemed to make a joke of his poor torn garments. It had whistled in and out of the holes, and set every jagged piece flapping: but he was only a sheep boy on a farm—a little boy, quite, quite a little boy. Still, it was nobody's business to care for him. The farmer's wife did not trouble about him one half as much as she did about her turkeys—was it likely! There were plenty of boys in the world, and turkeys cost a lot of money. Sometimes Karl would snuggle up against the warm side of his sheep and shut his eyes and try and think it was his mother. But it was no good, for the sheep would say “Ba-a-a,” and then Karl

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would remember that it was only pretence and nothing more.

But the fairies knew all about Karl. They noticed that he would never let his sheep stray inside their dancing rings, that he was very careful never to break the little toadstools they used for seats and that he loved the flowers and talked to them as if they were real people.

Oh, yes, the fairies knew all about it, of course. And they were very angry with the wind for tormenting him so, and with the brambles for their nasty, scratchy, tearing ways, and with all the people at the farm for not loving such a dear little wee boy. That very day they began to talk matters over. And that very night things began to happen.

The moon shone so brightly that it awoke Karl, who never slept very soundly because he never had quite enough to eat.

On the edge of the table sat a fairy with a needle and thread and a great pile of soft grey stuff that looked as if it had been woven out of mole's fur. She had a big pair of scissors and Karl's little torn knickerbockers on the table by her. The moonlight glistened on her needle as it flew in and out at an astonishing rate. Now and then she would pick up her scissors to clip off a little bit of stuff, or cut a thread "click." Such

a shining pair of scissors, such a nice, cheerful sound;
and as she sewed she sang:

“Little needle, dance and dart;
Do your work with all your heart;
Little thread, hold strong and true;
Soft grey cloth, be always new.”

Karl listened and watched till the shiny needle began to dazzle him: and he shut his eyes to rest them and then he fell asleep.

Next morning his old knickerbockers were gone and over the back of the chair hung a new pair made of the softest and warmest grey cloth. There was a pocket on either side, and in each pocket was a new threepenny piece.

“Where have you been stealing new clothes from, you young rascal?” said the Farmer’s wife. “You’ll be put in prison yet, and there will be a peck of trouble for us all, getting a new sheep boy and perhaps suspected of stealing also.”

But Karl did not answer.

On his way to the pastures with his sheep he saw a blind man sitting by the wayside begging.

“For Pity’s sake give me something to buy bread,” said he, and Karl, delighted to be able to give for once, took out both his silver pieces and laid them in the beggar’s hand. The man had an old fiddle and bow

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lying across his knees. "Stop, little master," said he as Karl was moving away. "Take this fiddle; with it you will be able to play the heart out of all who listen, so they will be able to refuse you nothing and all who hear it must follow it."

A wonderful thing happened that day. While Karl was tending his sheep one got caught by its fleece in a bramble; as he loosed it the nasty thing caught at him instead and tore a great hole in his new grey knickerbockers. Karl saw it plainly, a great jagged rent that showed his thin little leg right through it. He had never had anything quite new before, old clothes that the farmer's children had cast off as being too shabby were given him as wages. So it was no wonder that when he saw the great hole he burst into tears.

But he did not cry long. "Tears won't mend tears," said he, and, laughing at his own little joke, wiped them away with his sleeve.

Then he looked to see how much damage had really been done and looked and looked again—rubbed his eyes and stared. There was no tear there, the stuff was as smooth and perfect as ever, for it was Fairy cloth, you know.

That night he had no trouble in collecting his sheep to drive them home. He just put his fiddle to his chin as he had seen the wandering musician do, and touched the string with the bow, when of its own will it leapt

up and down, making such enchanting music that he only had to walk on ahead and his sheep all followed close on his heels.

That night the moonlight woke him again. There sat the Fairy the same as before, with more grey stuff, and Karl's little ragged coat before her. And this is what she sang:

"Fly, little needle, swiftly along.
Keep threaded, dear thread, and steady and strong,
For Karl will be off to tend his sheep
The moment the first little sunbeam shall peep."

Next morning a fine new grey coat hung over Karl's chair with *four* pockets and a freshly baked cake in each.

"A new coat, eh?" said the Farmer's wife at breakfast. "Out of this you go, if you are so clever at stealing your clothes, you can steal your breakfast too. Shoo, now! out of this." And she took off her shoe and flung it at him, having nothing else handy.

As Karl walked to the pasture with his fiddle under his chin, the bow danced so gladly and madly up and down the strings that the very shoe followed with the sheep, dancing its best, too, which was not up to much, for it was all lop-sided, and big and heavy too, poor dear.

Karl was hungry, having had no breakfast, and directly he reached the pasture he put down his fiddle

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and began to eat his cakes. He had finished two and was just going to start on the third when a miserably clad old beggar woman came hobbling past.

"For Pity's sake give me something to eat," said she, "for I am starving."

Karl gave her his remaining cakes at once. After all, he had eaten two already, and the old woman did indeed seem miserably thin and poor.

"Thank you, little Master," said she; then she drew an acorn out of her pocket and gave it to him. "Take this, and at need dig a little hole with your finger and bury it in the ground. It will immediately spring up into an immense oak tree covered with acorns; if you pick these and scatter them a forest will grow, so thick that no one can pass through it. But be careful not to throw them behind as well as in front of you, or you will be caught in the thicket yourself." With that she went on her way.

Now the sheep were always straying towards a cliff which overhung the sea, so that it took Karl, who feared that they might fall over and be killed, all his time to drive them away from it.

To try the magic acorn he took it now and planted it at the edge of this cliff. Immediately a great oak tree sprang up, covered, as the old woman had predicted, with acorns. These Karl took and strewed along the edge of the cliff. Very soon a forest sprang

up there, so thickly growing and composed of trees with such low, sweeping boughs that the sheep could not possibly push their way through.

Presently a forester came riding past, in the green livery of the King, and stared to see all the beautiful trees.

"Tell me, boy," said he to Karl, "how did these trees come there?—For there were none yesterday, of that I am sure—and oaks do not spring up in a night."

Karl told him how it had been done, and he began to pick acorns and threw them, but no trees grew up for him; and he would have caught Karl and beat him and abused him for telling lies, but Karl plucked a handful of acorns and tossed them hither and thither so that the man saw he had spoken no more than the truth, and rode off, much astonished, to tell his Master, the King.

That night when Karl played his sheep home the shoe of the Farmer's wife danced home too; and when the sheep were folded, danced into the kitchen before him.

"Oh!" said the Farmer's wife, coming in and seeing it perched quietly on a stool in front of Karl's chair. "Not content with stealing your clothes you thought to steal my shoe, too, did you?" And she went to pick up the shoe, thinking to give Karl a blow with it. But as she stooped it jumped up briskly, hit her a tremen-

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dous smack across the face and leaped through the window, smashing the glass to a thousand bits.

"The thing's bewitched!" cried the woman, sinking into a chair and putting her hand up to her eye, which was already turning black and blue and purple and every imaginable colour. But she was not long quiet and leapt to her feet the next moment and drove Karl before her up the stairs to his attic, declaring he should have no supper from her, for it was all his fault.

Karl was very hungry, and when he got to his attic he began to turn out the pockets of his little new coat to see if there were not a few loose crumbs remaining. Better still, though, he found new cakes, sweet and warm and fresh as though they were just out of the oven. What do you think of that?

Again the Moonlight awoke him, and again he saw the tiny fairy seated on the table, busy making a little grey waistcoat and a little woollen shirt from the pattern of his ragged old garment which lay before her. And this is what she sang:

"Fly, needle and thread,
Your task to complete,
So wee Karl may be ready
The King to go meet."

Next morning the little waistcoat and soft white woollen shirt hung all ready over Karl's chair, and a

very dear little boy he looked too, when he was dressed in them.

The Farmer's wife glanced slyly at Karl when he went into breakfast, but put a bowl of porridge before him without any words. She thought he must have had the clothes given him when he was out with the sheep, and determined to follow him, without his knowledge, and watch and see what happened; for besides the new clothes there was that strange fiddle that she had seen him playing, the sound of which the sheep followed.

As Karl drove his sheep from the pen the shoe was waiting for him, jig-jigging as if in a hurry to be gone. Some one must have given it a coat of blacking during the night, for it was shining brightly. The sight of it was too much for the Farmer's wife, who was peering from the window to see Karl go, and she flung out the big knife, with which she had been cutting bacon, at it. A good aim, too, for she cut it right in half.

That did not stop its jigging though. The two halves danced up to Karl, and stood jigging there till they drew his attention, and, looking down, he saw that the one big old shoe had turned into two little shoes, with shining buckles.

They stood jigging there so invitingly that Karl slipped them on to his little bare feet. Then he tucked his fiddle under his chin, and the shoes danced away with him so lightly that he felt as if he was treading

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on air; while the sheep followed on his heels, and not only the sheep but the cows and the oxen and the goats and the turkeys and the cocks and the hens, so that the farmyard was empty.

"By my great grandmother, this is too much!" screamed the Farmer's wife, and, catching up the broom to beat Karl with, raced out of the house and after him; and the farmer followed and the milkmaid and the ploughman and farm cat, while Karl danced in front, with his bow dancing on the fiddle strings.

Out to the pastures he led them, all dancing like mad.

Once in the open pastures Karl stopped playing, and the sheep and the cows began to graze, while the fowls pecked at the acorns.

"Go back, all of you," said the Farmer's wife, "and I will stay here and see what happens." So the ploughman and the milkmaid and the farmer all went back to their work, while the Farmer's wife hid behind an oak tree.

Presently there came the sound of horns blowing in the distance and the sight of silken flags fluttering. Then the tramp of many horses' feet, and the King rode over the common.

It looked all of a sudden as if the pastures had blossomed into a rare flower garden, so gay were the silken robes and flying scarfs of the ladies, and the

brave apparel of the men, while their attendants held fluttering pennants, and blew on silver horns, and all the bridles and breastpieces of the horses tinkled silver bells. There was the King too, all white and silver, save for his yellow hair, which hung from beneath a small cap, ornamented by a crane's feather held with a jewelled brooch.

At the farm all the days had seemed mud coloured, greyey, browney-tinted days even when the sun shone; cold, hungry, wretched days; greasy, untidy, down-at-heel, sullen days. Out on the common, where the wind was gay and clear, and the sunshine sweet, this garden of gay colours seemed to belong to a different world.

"This is the sort of company he keeps, the varmint, is it?" said the Farmer's wife, trying to pat down her hair—which was like nothing so much as carrots growing roots uppermost—and scrape some of the dirt from her face with a piece of chip; thinking that she would go out and beg the King to build them a new farm and buy their old lame horse for a hundred pounds.

While the Farmer's wife was practising over to herself what she would say to the King and how she would say it, the King was talking to Karl.

"Is it true, little boy, that you made these oak trees grow where none grew before, and that you can make a forest spring up when and where you will?" he asked, speaking very gently and politely; for he was a great

and brave King, and all great and brave people are gentle and polite.

"It is quite true, Your Majesty."

"And will you show us?" asked the King.

"Of course I will, right gladly, if you will ask all your people to stand back a little so that they may not be caught by the boughs," answered Karl.

Then the King ordered all his people to move back, and Karl drove his sheep, which had gathered to stare at the strangers, further away, for he loved them, and was afraid of them being trapped by the trees.

Then he plucked a handful of acorns and began to scatter them, and the trees began to grow and to spread.

"Bravo!" cried the King, and faster and faster Karl scattered the acorns, and the trees spread, to a wood, then to a forest—a world of green leaves, low-sweeping boughs, and great grey trunks.

The Farmer's wife, who had hidden to pry on Karl, found she was trapped, and began to scream.

"There must be some wild animal imprisoned there," said the King, but the thickening trees shut out the sound very soon, and no more was thought of it.

One fair lady who had ridden with the King was nearly trapped also. She had laughed at Karl and would not believe his power, so had not moved back with the rest. When the trees began to grow the top boughs of the foremost had caught at the flying

ends of her scarf, so that she would have been drawn into the wall of green in a moment if one of the courtiers had not whipped out his sword and cut the scarf free so that she was just able to scurry away in time.

The trees spread and spread till the King stopped Karl laughingly. "We shall have no pasture land for the sheep or cattle if this goes on," said he. "We have already oak enough to build a whole fleet of ships, and a whole city of houses. I would indeed that these trees lay to the North of my Palace; they would be more useful there than here, for the wind blows fiercely against the walls in the winter time."

"If Your Majesty will go home to the palace, the trees shall come after you," said Karl, "should my fiddle but play truly."

So the King and his Courtiers and Ladies and Serving-men, and Huntsmen, and Men-at-Arms rode back to the palace, half turning all the way in their saddles that they might see the wonderful sight. For there was little Karl in his Fairy suit, and his silver buckled shoes that danced around his feet, and his fiddle under his chin with the bow dancing upon it, and his white-fleeced sheep close at his heels with here and there a lamb prancing on ahead. And behind them the great forest of sweeping green trees moving to the measure of the music.

Arrived at the Palace the King and his Courtiers

passed across the draw bridge and into the Court yard, while Karl lead the trees as a general leads his regiment, round to the northern walls, outside of which they spread an impenetrable wall a mile or more in thickness, the Farmer's wife still imprisoned among them.

"Bravo! Bravo!" cried the King, clapping his hands.

And "Bravo! Bravo!" cried all the Courtiers, and the Ladies and the Men-at-Arms and the Huntsmen, "Bravo! Bravo!"

"Come and live with me in my Palace," said the King, "and you shall dine at my table, and drink out of a gold cup, and be my own son. Then when you are a grown man you shall lead my armies to battle as you have led your oak trees."

Little Karl laughed. "A poor sort of a Prince I would make!" said he. "And as for going to war, I would not care either to kill or be killed. Nay, leave me with my sheep, for I make a good shepherd enough, and I might make a bad Prince."

So the King let him have his own way, feeling that perhaps, after all, it was the right one. But he gave him the sweetest and best of the Royal Meadows for his very own, along with a little brook that flowed through it, and a dear little cottage that stood on it, all covered over with honeysuckle. And he sent his

own old nurse to keep house for the boy, and cook and mend and sweep for him; and any one of Karl's sheep that died he replaced with one from his own flocks.

So Karl was content. Even when the King's little daughter grew up, and he grew up and they fell in love with each other he would not change his state. So as she loved him very much and wished to marry him she was bound to change hers. It was no good living in a Palace when one's love lived in a cottage; so she became a shepherdess to watch him, and found it much less tiring than being a Princess.

The Farmer's wife? Well, there she stayed. I suppose she's dead by now, for all this happened ages ago. But she was alive for a long, long time. And the people as they passed used often to stop and listen and say, "Hist, hist, hark to that owl!"

But it was the Farmer's wife shouting herself hoarse.



TIM THE TINKER'S BOY



He parted the mass of green hair beneath his chin to gaze at him



TIM was the Tinker's boy. All day and every day Tim drove the donkey laden with pots and pans. And all day and every day the Tinker drove Tim with the aid of a big stick. It was a dreary life; if the roads were not hot and dusty they were heavy with mud. Tim was always hungry, and though he would pull his little belt as tight as it would go he was still hungry. If there was one thing more than another he wished, it was that he might once, just once, have enough to eat; though really he scarcely believed it possible.

One day the Tinker, the donkey and Tim stopped at a little village by the sea. The Tinker went in to a farm to feast on bread and cheese and beer; Tim could see him through the window and could even smell the cheese and fresh, warm bread. He had been left outside to look after the donkey, but all the donkey wanted was to munch its nice dinner of hay and thistles; so that

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Tim—the only one of the three with no dinner—left it to itself and wandered off down to the shore, and over the golden sands and over the slippery rocks till he reached one great flat rock, against which the lazy tide flapped. Not the waters of a pool, you know, but the real sleeping summer sea.

He lay down quite flat, he could lie very flat, for he had been given no food that day, and felt a little better if he lay on the place it ought to have been; so he lay there almost contentedly and gazed down into the clear golden-brown water—right down, down to the real golden sand beneath—and listened to the water going lip-lap, lip-lap against the rock.

“Lip-lap—Lip-lap-lim, jump in, jump in—Tim, Tim, lip-lap-lim, jump in, Tim.”

There could be no doubt about it; one had only to listen a moment or two to be quite, quite sure that was what it was saying.

“I be blowed if I do!” said Tim. He had not been brought up very well, you may be sure, or he would have said, “No, thank you,” instead of using such an ugly expression.

But after all it must have seemed somehow funny—for would you believe it?—the water laughed—ripple upon ripple, peal upon peal. And the laughter seemed to run all across the water. And the waves flashed

like white teeth. And the breath of the sea was sweeter than anything on earth.

Then all at once it became wonderfully still, two white arms were stretched up out of the water. Upon which—why he scarcely knew, Tim suddenly thought of his Mother whom he had never seen; and because other little boys' Mothers had arms that it seemed the right thing to tumble straight into, and be cuddle-wuddled up, in Tim rolled head foremost into the water; and the white arms caught him and held him close and warm—and he sank and sank and sank with them still around him right down to the very bottom of the sea.

He felt a little giddy when he got there, for it had all been so very sudden, you see.

Then he heard a voice say, "Isn't he a darling!" and another voice say:

"Look at his ducky little toes!"

"And his curly hair."

"And his funny little button nose!"

"The darling!"

Tim sat up feeling rather indignant, for they spoke of him as if he were just a baby instead of a great big boy of seven. Then he felt suddenly shy, for sitting all round him were a ring of girls, beautiful girls with long, fair hair and lovely eyes; only—would you believe it—they had no feet or legs, only tails. Silvery, shiny, many-tinted tails it is true—but just tails.

"What is it?" asked one seeing how Tim stared; and then they guessed what he was looking at, and they all blushed very, very red, and their eyes filled with tears, and they drooped their heads so sadly that Tim was terribly distressed, and he put his arm round the neck of one and patted the cheek of another, and stooped and kissed the hand of a third—for he hated to make anyone unhappy, and cried, "Cheerful up, cheerful up," as a little boy I know does when his Mother is tired or sad.

And they all cheered up and laughed and kissed him, and brought him some strange sea cake to eat—very nice—and potted shrimps, and sea-kale, and baked sea apples, and let him feast, and no one said "Come now," or "That's enough," but just waited till he said it himself. Then the eldest of the sea maidens stretched out her arms and he crept into them, and the others began to sing, so swayingly, sleepily, softly, that before he knew what was happening he was fast, fast asleep.

When he awaked feeling quite, quite fresh, and hungry again and had had something more to eat, the sisters—there were six of them in all—began to ask him questions. They wanted to know what flowers were out on shore, if the hawthorn was in bloom yet, if the cowslips were over, and the wild roses in bud. Then they wanted to know if the ladies on shore were wearing summer dresses yet, and whether muslins or

silks were in fashion. Tim answered all their questions, and then thought he might ask some in turn, and the very first was:

"Why don't you go on shore and see it all for yourselves?" But he was sorry the moment he had spoken, for they all looked sad again, and glanced at him and glanced at their tails and hung their heads.

"Oh, I am so sorry," said Tim, "I am so, so sorry. Oh, bother the beastly old tails. Why do they make you sad? Oh dear, dear, what can I do?"

"Nothing," replied the eldest sadly, but stroking him as she spoke to show that she was not at all angry with him—"nothing, unless——"

"Do you think, oh sisters, perhaps he could help!" broke in another.

"No, no," said a third. "It would be cruel; he is but a baby."

"I'm not a baby!" cried Tim angrily. "I'm a boy, 'most a man, and I'm not afraid of anything."

"Perhaps he could."

"Perhaps——"

"Who knows?"

"He could but try," sighed all the sisters at once. And then the eldest drew him to her again and told him how they were all daughters of a King, and how they had lived in a castle at the edge of the sea so happily together, till one day as they all played together

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on the Terrace at the edge of the sea wall, the youngest had tossed her ball into the water by accident, and—jumping over after it, with no thought but for her glittering toy—had been caught by the old man of the sea, who had begged her to marry him, and, as she would not, but cried and cried day and night for her sisters, he had shut her up in his deep-sea caves; and next time the five daughters of the King were walking upon the Terrace, too sad to play, and thinking of their little lost sister, he had appeared to them swimming in the water, with his great green beard floating for miles around, and said if the second youngest would but jump into the water he would take her to her sister and she could fetch her back to her home herself. So she did, but never returned; only the old man who came and said the two were afraid to venture back through the water alone, and would a third go to fetch them? And so a third went, and a fourth, and then the sixth went with the fifth because she felt anything would be better than being left all alone when all her sisters were gone. And the old man asked each, in turn, to marry him and she would not—neither would any one let the other. And when he found he could not persuade them by any means, in spite of all the treasures he showed them, he turned them all into mermaids with finny tails in the place of pretty feet and legs—so they could never go on shore again; although

almost each night they used to swim to the walls of their father's castle, and watch the lights in the windows and long and long to leave the weary sea world; but they could not climb the walls and none heard them, while if any fishermen with their boats caught sight of them they splashed at them with their oars, and rowed off as fast as they could, thinking they were evil spirits.

"And what can I do? I am ready," said Tim, pulling his little belt tight, not because he was hungry this time but because it made him feel more determined and courageous.

"My child," answered the eldest of the sisters, "I am almost afraid to tell you, lest you should venture and come to some evil."

"Not I," answered Tim boldly.

So she told him how the old man in his rage, because he was so roasting and boiling and stewing hot with rage, had gone off to the North Pole—far, far away; and if only he could be found, and some one would be brave enough to cut his long green beard off **him**, all his power would be gone and all his spells **broken**. But whoever tried it must be very brave, very cunning, and very patient, for it was a long, long journey and the old man was strong and powerful, while the very look of him would frighten most people.

"I am not afraid, I will go," said the boy valiantly.

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So they called the pilot fish, who is the wisest of all the fish, and knows his way all over the seas, and knows where and how the currents run, and the coasts of all the countries, and the tides and the winds. And the pilot fish told Tim where the North lay, and told him that he must swim in that direction, and only that direction day and night till he reached the Ice World. And then he would meet the seals, and he must ask them to take him to their King, and the King of Seals would give him a coat so warm that he could swim among the ice, and even under it without feeling cold. And he must go on till he came to the place where the water was all frozen, and cross the ice on foot, and walk on and on till he saw the North Pole sticking out of the ice and the old man of the sea sitting there combing his green beard. And having got thus far, he must use his own cunning to cut it off as best he could; that had nothing to do with the pilot fish.

Then Tim said good-bye to the six sisters, who kissed him and wept over him, afraid that he might never return.

And one gave him a golden comb, saying, "Tell the old man that if he lets you comb his beard with that it will grow golden."

And another gave him a pair of scissors, and said, "Tell the old man if he trims his beard with those he will never need to trim it again."

And another gave him a cake, saying, "Eat of this when you are hungry, and you will never need food, for it will never become less."

And yet another gave him a large pearl, saying, "Hold this in your mouth when you are thirsty and it will be like fresh spring water in your throat." So they parted and Tim struck out bravely to the North. And it was morning and the sun was to his right, then it was above him, and then to his left and then night came. Still Tim swam all through the night; and again the sun was on his right and above him, and to his left and again night came. And so three times; so that he was very tired, though when he was hungry he ate of the cake that never grew less; and when he was thirsty he sucked the pearl in his mouth so that he did not want for food or drink, but was very, very tired. At last at the end of the third day he came to a great floating island of ice. And a great many seals were there, both on it and swimming round it, who stared at him with round, curious eyes.

"Take me to your King," said Tim. But they all seemed too busy or too lazy to take much notice of him beyond staring.

At last Tim got impatient and he hit one of the great creatures a swinging blow on the side of his head. "Now take me to your King as you are told," he said. And the seal obeyed him quite meekly while

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all the others moved aside to let them pass, thinking he was a very great man indeed to dare to hit one of them.

The Seal King sat on a huge throne of ice. He was an immense creature with shiny, silky coat and great white tusks, but Tim was not afraid.

"Good day, Your Highness," he said.

"Good day, Whipper Snapper," answered the King rather amused. "What are you seeking for?"

"A warm coat to keep the ice from cutting my skin," said Tim.

"Do you think you will get it?" asked the King.

"If you won't give it to me I must take it," answered Tim. And the King was so amused at such a little creature having such a great spirit that he gave it to him, and asked what more he wished for.

"I would borrow an apron from one of your wives," answered the boy.

And the King laughed, so that the other seals and the bears and the foxes all came round to see what the joke was.

And the King asked Tim what he needed it for and Tim told them, and they all laughed again and again till the ice began to crack. And the fox lent him his brush to help him, for all foxes call their tails brushes, you know, and in the very far north they are made to screw on and off, because in the old days, when

the foxes sat down, their brushes would often freeze into the ice, and then they were in a nice position if any danger came and they wanted to run away. And the Polar Bear gave him a pot of bear's grease as his contribution. And this is what Tim did.

First he put on the seal's swimming coat; then he tied on the apron, and put the comb and brush, and the scissors the mermaids had given him, and the pot of bear's grease in his pocket. And he twisted up his hair in a little curl, and he smirked and he smiled and looked exactly like an obliging young barber, out of a barber's shop. And thanking them all very much slipped into the water again, and swam round the ice and under the ice till all the water came to an end.

Then he stepped on to the ice, and stuck his comb behind his ear, and gave the curl above his forehead a little twist and set off boldly towards the place where he could see the North Pole sticking straight up out of the ice. And there was the old man sitting beneath it fast asleep.

Now Tim knew from his experience with the Tinker that people were very ill-tempered if you woke them, so he sat down quietly as near the old man as possible to wait while he had his sleep out; as near as possible I say, for the great, long green beard spread out to such a distance that he did not dare to go very near for fear of treading on it.

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Presently the great old man began to mutter and stir and stretch and yawn—such great yawns that his beard blew out like a great fan and made everything quite dark, for a while hiding the sun completely from view.

“Now, by my beard,” he muttered, “I smell a mortal.” And he sniffed and snorted so that the air was once more darkened with the great green cloud.

But Tim was not frightened, not a bit of it, but took advantage of a clear space before him to approach the old man till he stood right at his head, which so surprised the monster that he parted the mass of green hair beneath his chin to gaze at him.

“Well, Snippet,” he said.

“Well, Your Highness,” responded Tim, bowing very low, which pleased the old man mightily.

“What do you come here for?” he asked, almost politely. “To be fed on toast and butter?”

“May it please Your Majesty, I come from the six daughters of the King.”

“Heigho!”

“And they are all fighting as to who shall have the honour of marrying Your Majesty when you return, having only refused you, one and all, for the same reason.”

“And what might that be?”

“That green does not suit their complexions, and

Your Highness' beautiful beard being of that tint they thought that it might make them look pale and sallow when they were near you, and so your love might cease. But now they would marry you anyhow, under any conditions. Though, if I might suggest——" Tim pursed up his lips and looked very important, then stuck out his chest and put his head on one side.

"What would you suggest, Whipper Snapper," growled the old man, trying hard not to show how pleased he was.

"Well," said Tim, "I am a court barber you see, (which he wasn't, for as you know very well he was only a tinker's boy). And I have a wonderful comb here, that leaves the hair through which it is passed as golden as it is itself. And I have a pot of magic ointment that makes it shine like the sun, and I have a pair of golden scissors that leave a diamond at the end of each hair that they have trimmed; and if only you would allow me to treat your beautiful hair and beard with them, you would be the wonder of the whole world, so that not only six, but all the Princesses in the universe would be dying to marry you."

"Very well," said the old man, "but if what you say does not come true, I will have you on toast for supper this very night."

"Oh, that's all right," answered Tim, not the least bit afraid.

First he said he must trim and comb the old man's eyebrows and lashes, as it would not do to have them green while his hair and beard were yellow like the sun. And so he did, then dabbed a great piece of bear's grease over each eyelid.

"Hey, hey, hey!" shouted the old man, his arms going like a windmill, "you are blinding me."

"Oh, no, Your Highness, I must leave it on for a little moment that the silken shine may have time to soak in; but then you will be delighted with the effect. Now please keep quiet and I will begin on your beard."

So Tim began to comb and to snip, very cunningly so that he seemed to be combing far more than he was snipping, while he kept on exclaiming:

"Oh, the beautiful gold colour!"

"Oh, the silken tresses!"

"Oh, the diamonds, how they shine!"

"It strikes me, Snipper, you're snipping too much," said the giant.

"Oh, if you could but see it!" answered Tim, and smiled to himself.

"The scissors seem very near my face."

"It's just the ends of the short hairs I'm trimming."

"The beard seems very light on my chin."

"The golden hairs are so fine. Give a great breath, Your Highness, that I may see them spread out in the sunshine and know that there are no tangles."

And the Giant gave a great breath, and all the mass of beard that Tim had cut off blew away across the world, surprising all the inhabitants very much, for they thought it was a forest of green trees being hurled through the air.

Then the way was clear, and Tim seized hold of the remaining tuft of hair in one hand, exclaiming at the same time:

"Oh, the beautiful gold locks! Oh the diamonds!" He snipped it off with one stroke.

And the old man of the sea?

Well, there was a little, odd, gurgling, popping sort of sound, and he just sank away to a little dry heap of skin and bone like a pricked balloon. And there to this day, if you go to the North Pole, you may see that little shrivelled tag of rubbish that was once that *tremendous*, awful old man of the sea.

And Tim saw something gold on the top of the heap, and found it was the golden ball of the youngest Princess, which the vain old giant had pierced a hole through and hung round his neck for a locket.

So Tim took it and hung it round his own neck instead, and started home, walking and swimming till he reached the seal's land.

There he gave the fox back his brush, and the bear his pot of grease, and the King the coat that he had lent him, and thanked them all very much for their

kindness. They all wanted him to stay with them, and they would give him all he wished and he could marry the Seal King's daughter, for they were all very thankful to him for killing that old man of the sea, who had been a nuisance to them, as he had to everyone else. But, of course, he could not do that, he had his own Princesses to see to.

So he swam and he swam, with the sun to his left in the morning, and over his head at noon, and to his right at evening time, for three whole days and three whole nights, till he came to the Sea Terrace of the King's Palace. And then along the wall, looking over the sea, and watching for his coming sat the six Princesses, dangling their feet over the wall. Yes, *feet!* Not tails! Beautiful slender little feet clad in scarlet shoes and scarlet silk stockings.

And there they had sat, in spite of all their Father and Mother could say, ever since the day that he had cut off that terrible old man's beard and they had been able to climb the sea steps to the Terrace of their home.

And they would not eat, and they would not rest till they saw Tim, tiny Tim, the tinker's boy, swimming back to them again safe and sound with the golden ball of the youngest Princess hanging round his neck.

And this is the end of their tails, and my tale, and the tale of Tinker Tim.



THE PRINCE AND THE GOOSE
GIRL



The horse swerved just as its hoofs were upon her



THE PRINCE AND THE GOOSE GIRL



ONCE there was a great Prince who was so great a fighter that no one dared to deny him anything that he asked, and people would give up their houses and lands, their children, and even their own freedom rather than offend him. Everything the people had was his at the asking, they feared him so, and would all tremble and shake when he came thundering past on his war horse, whose hoofs struck great pieces of their fields from the earth as he passed, and whose breath was fire. And they feared his sword, which was so sharp that it wounded the wind as it cut through it, and his battle axe that could cut the world in half—or so they said—and his frown that was like a cloud, and his voice that was like thunder—or so they said.

Only Erith, the Goose Girl, feared him not at all. “He is only a man,” she would say. “What you tell of his sword and his battle axe and his great frown is all a child’s tale. He is just a man. He eats and

sleeps like other men; if you wounded him he would bleed. Some day he will love a woman and be her slave for a while just as any other man is. I wouldn't give that for the great bully!" she added, and snapped her little fingers.

"He, he, Erith, that's all very well," the folk would say. "Wait till you meet him thundering over the Common; you will fly as quick as any of your geese, we wager."

"I wouldn't move. It's a man's place to make room for a lady, not a lady's place to make room for a man. I wouldn't move, I tell you." And Erith stamped her little foot. It did not seem to impress the village people much, perhaps because it was bare and made no noise on the soft, dusty road, and one needs to make plenty of noise in this world if one is to be noticed.

"A lady! A lady!" they shrieked. "A lord to make place for a lady! Listen to her. My Lady Goosey Gander! A fine lady indeed, with bare feet and no hat."

"There's lots that have shoes that are not ladies," said Erith. "Shoes won't make one, nor bare feet mar one. I'm a better lady than any of you, though, for I'd not run away for anyone, even that ugly old Prince. Bah! he's not noble or good or brave; he's just ugly—an ugly great bully!"

"Wait a bit, Lady Goosey Gander, wait a bit. If

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ever you see him you will forget all your fine tales. Why, he's as tall as the church."

"And as strong as the sea."

"Why, his hands are like oak trees."

"And he cares no more than death who he attacks."

"Neither do I care," said Erith, setting back her shoulders and tossing her chin. "All men are babies, anyhow!"

The village gasped. That she should dare!—she, a chit of a Goose Girl, to talk of the terror of the whole countryside like that—"All men are babies!" Well, well!

"It's a good thing that you are only what you are, my girl," growled the blacksmith. "For if you were of any account, and the Prince heard what you said, I would not give a farthing for your life."

"He, he, Lady Goosey Gander," hooted the children from that day, as they passed her on the way to school, tending her geese up on the Common; but she only laughed at them, for she was really and truly brave, you know; and really truly brave people do not trouble much about trifles.

One day one of the Prince's men heard the children and asked Erith what they meant.

"They call me Lady Goosey Gander, because I said I was as good a Lady as the Prince is a gentleman, and better, for I know enough to be civil and kind," an-

swered Erith, quite unconcerned, busy peeling a willow wand with her little bone-handled knife. She wove these willow wands into baskets while she watched her geese, and sold them in the neighbouring market town, for she was poor and had her old mother to keep. She did not stop her work as she spoke; it was more important to her than all the gentlemen or all the Princes in the world. She wanted a bag of meal, and she wanted shoes before the winter began. That was her business, other people might attend to their own.

The gentleman was amused. He told his fellows at supper that night and there was much laughter over the Goose Girl's words. A page waiting at table told his fellows. And then the Prince's own man told him as he helped him off with his armour that night.

The Prince laughed a great, big, bellowing laugh, but the red swayed up into his face angrily all the same.

"Where does this chit live?" he demanded.

The man servant shrugged his shoulders. "No one knows where she lives, she is of so little importance she might well live nowhere. But she feeds her geese each day on the Common above the cliffs to the East, between here and the sea. A bare-footed, common little thing."

"There's one thing uncommon enough about her, she dares to say what she thinks about me, and that's more than any of you do. I hear that she is very ugly, though."

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"Most terribly ugly, Your Highness," answered the man.

"And old," said the Prince.

"Very old, Your Highness; quite, quite old."

"And deaf, too."

"As deaf as a post, Your Highness. It's evident she has never heard what all your subjects say about you," agreed the man, for he always did agree, he was too frightened to do anything else.

"It is too evident she has heard," said the Prince grimly. "And she is not deaf."

"Oh, no, Your Highness."

"And she is young."

"Indeed the merest child, Your Highness."

"And beautiful."

"As beautiful as the day, Your Highness."

"Only a country girl, of course, quite uneducated."

"Quite uneducated, Your Highness, and——"

What else he was going to say remained unsaid, for he was stooping over the Prince's foot unbuckling his spurs while he spoke, and the Prince lifted his foot—quite easily as it seemed—and with it lifted the man, quite easily, but with such force that he bumped against the ceiling, "plump!" and then came to the floor "bump!"

There were several other men in the room. However, they did not run to pick him up, they were too frightened of their master. But the Prince just put

out the toe of his other foot and touched him, and he rolled over and over like a ball, and down the stairs, limpitty, limpitty, limp.

Then another came forward to undo the other spur, and he was treated the same.

"Take them both out and bury them!" shouted the Prince. "And if they're not dead, bury them all the same!" Then he got up and flung round his chamber. He touched no one, but they all fled like hares.

After that he sat down in his great chair, bellowing for wine, and forbade any to go to bed or to sleep, while he sat there himself all night, railing at his men for cowards and fools, and drinking good red wine.

Next morning, directly it was light, the Prince ordered his horse, Sable, to be brought round, mounted it and rode like the wind to the Common by the sea.

"That chit of a goose girl is as good as dead," remarked his man servant as best he could for a broken jaw; indeed, you never saw anything so broken; all his legs and arms seemed nothing but splints and bandages. However, it was a common enough sight in the court of that Prince, and no one took much notice.

The Prince thundered along on his great black horse, and presently came to the Common. In the middle of it he saw a flock of white geese and a patch of faded blue, which was the smock of the goose girl, who

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was sitting on a bundle of willow rods, busy with her basket-making.

The Prince did not draw rein. He thundered straight on. He scattered the geese in every direction. He would have galloped right over the girl, if his horse had not swerved just as its hoofs were upon her, then he drew rein.

The girl's hands did not stop from her work, but her great blue eyes were straight upon the Prince's fierce black ones.

"The beast is less of a beast than the master," she said, for she knew it was the horse that had refused to tread upon her.

The Prince pulled his reins, rode back a little, then spurred forward at Erith; but again the horse swerved, and, being held with too tight a hand to turn, reared back.

The girl was right under his great pawing black hoofs. But she laughed.

The horse dropped to earth so close that his chest was against hers, his head held high to escape striking her. The foam dropped from his bit, his eye seemed all fire.

The girl's face looked up like a flower from among the thick blackness of his flowing mane. And she laughed again.

This was more than the Prince could stand. He stooped from his saddle. He put his great hand into

the leather belt of Erith's smock and swung her up in front of him. There he held her with one hand in its iron glove, shook Sable's rein and put his spurs to his side.

"I have a mind to ride over the cliff with you," said the Prince.

"Ride over," laughed Erith. And she took the willow rod that was still in her hand and smote the horse's neck with it.

"Over the cliff, brave horse, and a good riddance of a bad man it will be," said she.

But the horse swerved at the edge of the cliff. And the Prince let him swerve. Then they turned and they raced like the wind, far, far.

"Are you afraid?" said the Prince.

"Afraid!" laughed the girl. She leant forward along the neck of the horse, caught one little hand round its ear, and cried, "Stop!"

Sable stopped so suddenly that his black mane and long black tail flew out like a cloud in front of him.

The Prince swore a great oath and smote him, but he did not move.

Then Erith, not willing to see him hurt, whispered, "Go!" And he went—like the wind.

Far, far and fast he went. The Prince was brooding too savagely to heed where they were being carried, so that when at length they came to a swamp, the horse,

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with one of his mighty strides, was borne far into it, and sank to his girths before his rider knew what was happening.

You may picture it. The man and the maid and the horse nearly up to their necks in black mud.

Erith was small and light as a bird. She sprang from the arms which were loosed to pull the reins; she caught at a tuft of grass here, at a shrub there, and in a moment was on dry ground, though black to the knees with mire.

But the Prince was a tall, great man. He was all in his armour, very heavy, and he could not move except downwards; but he flung himself from his horse.

"That's not so bad of him," thought Erith. "He cares to save it, for he himself would have a double chance on its back."

The fierce black eyes of the man and the laughing blue eyes of the goose girl met across the strip of swamp. His were as hard as steel, for he did not mean to beg his life from any such chit.

Erith moved away a little. "She is going to leave me," he thought, and grieved, for he did not wish to die.

The girl had disappeared among a group of trees, but in a moment she came back, dragging after her a large, thick bough.

Then she picked her way cautiously, as near as pos-

sible to the edge of the swamp. A little sturdy tree was growing there. Erith undid her leather belt; pressed her back firmly against the tree and strapped the belt round both it and herself. Then she stretched forward with the bough in both hands.

"Pull," she cried. And the Prince pulled.

The little tree creaked and strained. The Goose Girl's face grew crimson. It seemed as if her arms must be pulled from her body; but she held on and at last the Prince crawled out.

Erith had only been muddied a little above her smock, but the Prince was mud up to his armpits, and his face, too, was smeared where he had pushed his helmet back from his forehead with muddy hands. He said no word of thanks to the girl, for he felt that he looked a poor thing, and it made him angry.

"I would I had left you there," said the Goose Girl. "A thankless boor; you were not worth saving."

The Prince said no word but began to pull out his horse. Even then the maid had to help him, for it was very heavy and deeply sunk.

Once the horse was free, the maid moved over to a pool which lay at the edge of the swamp and began to bathe her feet and legs, and wash the mud from the hem of her smock.

The Prince got on his horse, with a great deal of clatter and grumbling, but she did not turn. They

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were many, many miles from home, the country was strange and wild; but there she sat, quite untroubled, paddling her feet in the water.

The Prince put his spurs to his horse and galloped away. But the beast would not go freely, spur it as he would. And soon he gave in, let it turn, and so back to the Goose Girl.

She had dried her feet on the grass by now, and was standing plaiting her long hair, eyeing herself in the pool and singing softly.

The Prince drew rein close to her and stuck out one foot. "You may come up," he said.

"An' may it please you," corrected the Goose Girl very quickly, with her blue eyes full upon him.

"May it please you," repeated the Prince with a wry smile at himself; and the maid put her foot on his and jumped lightly to the saddle before him.

Sable needed no spur then, but sprang into a light gallop.

"All this is mine," said the Prince boastfully, waving his arm as they went.

"I would it belonged to a better man," answered the Goose Girl. "And sit quietly or I will have no comfort riding with you."

"And you belong to me also," said the Prince savagely.

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"Not I; I belong to myself and that is more than you do."

"What do you mean by that?"

"No man belongs to himself who is the slave to evil temper and pride," answered Erith gravely and gently.

After a long ride they came to the Common again. On the edge of it was a tiny cottage.

"Stop here," said the Goose Girl, "and I will get down."

But the Prince clapped his spurs to his horse's side and they were off like the wind. Moreover he held the Goose Girl's hands so tightly that she could not touch Sable's ear or lean forward and speak to him. And so they galloped on till they clattered over the drawbridge into the court-yard of the castle.

A curious couple they looked. The Prince all caked with mud, the Goose Girl with her wet smock clinging round her bare ankles and her long yellow hair loose, hanging below her knees.

The Prince did not get off his horse, but sat like a statue, while all the Lords and Ladies, the Captains, and the men-at-arms, the pages and the serving men—even down to the scullery boy—thronged on the terrace and steps and at every window to look.

There was a long silence; then one lady, who thought she was pretty enough to do as she liked, tittered loudly.

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"The Lady Goosey Gander," she said. "The Lady Goosey Gander."

The Prince's brow grew like a thunder cloud. He flung his reins to one of the waiting grooms and alighted, then gave his hand to Erith, who leapt down as lightly as a bird. Still holding her hand he turned to his people.

"You are always wishing me to choose a wife," he thundered; "well, I have chosen one, and here she is. You can call the parson to bring his book and get the wedding feast ready; for I will be married in an hour's time."

With that he pulled off his helmet and flung round to kiss the Goose Girl; but——

"Shame on you!" she cried, "to think to marry a maid before you've asked her. You can marry the cat for all I care." And with that she caught him a great blow across the face and flung free.

Such a slap, such an echoing, sounding slap. The people of the court did not wait to see what would happen, for they knew what the Prince was like in one of his rages all too well, and fled into the palace like rabbits to their burrows—not even a face at the window was left. Only the Goose Girl did not run, but stood and laughed at the Prince's reddened face.

He caught at her wrist, yet not roughly. "*You will marry me!*"

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"Perhaps some day when you learn to speak civilly," she replied. And feeling her wrist free, she marched off over the drawbridge and over the meadow across the Common and so home. She had her own business to attend to.

Some of the Prince's people came creeping back. "Shall we after her, Your Highness?" they asked, thinking to get into his favour again; but he drove them from him with the flat of his great sword and with oaths and shouting; then flung off to his own chamber and sat there drinking red wine till the night was near over; and none of his Court as much as daring to go to bed till he slept.

Next morning he was off again at dawn on his black horse across the Common. There sat Erith among her geese, weaving baskets. The very horse neighed with joy at the sight of her sitting there in the sunshine, but the Prince only scowled.

"Will you marry me?" said he.

"No!" said she, "and that's flat; not till you learn manners, at least."

Then he got off his horse and took out his sword and killed all her geese.

"You will have to marry me now or starve, for you have lost all your means of getting a living."

But the girl only laughed and took the dead geese and began plucking them, moving over to the side that

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the wind blew towards the Prince, so that the feathers flew and stuck all over his armour in every chain and crevice and crack; and threw such handfuls of down in his face that when he went to seize her he was powerless.

Next day, Erith having trussed the plucked geese, took them to the market and sold them for a gold piece.

As she came home singing, she met an army of men bearing osier rods.

"What have the osiers done that they should all be cut in one day?" she asked.

"The Prince sent us to cut them, Lady Goosey Gander," they answered, jeering. "There is not one left at the brook's edge now, and your basket-making is spoiled."

But the Goose Girl only laughed, and turned back to the town and bought wool with her gold piece.

Next day as she sat before the fire in her cottage spinning the wool into yarn to sell at the market, the Prince came striding in at the little door, bent half double, for it was so low and he so tall with his helmet on his head.

"It is only old women who remain with covered heads in the house," said the Goose Girl. "Good morning, old dame."

The Prince took off his helmet. Somehow her ways pleased him, for he was sick of soft speaking.

"Will you marry me?" said he.

"When you kneel to ask me," said she; "not before."

Then in a rage he took all her yarn, flung it into the fire, and was out of the house and away, thundering on his great black horse. But the Goose Girl only laughed.

Then she took a pair of scissors and cut off her long hair, yellow as honey in the comb, and fine as silk. This she spun and wove into a scarf, the rarest scarf ever seen.

On the third day, having finished her work, she was up at dawn and walked off to the court of a King, many miles distant. There she sought the Queen, and sold her the scarf for twenty pieces of gold.

"But why did you cut off your beautiful hair?" asked the Queen.

"It was just for ever in the way," replied the Goose Girl. She told no tales. To begin with she did not like them, and to end with she *did* like the Prince; perhaps because he was as fearless and obstinate as she herself.

Passing through the town, she bought a bag of meal and porridge.

"The bag will do to cover my bare poll when it rains," she said to the merchant, and laughed. The gold jangled in the pocket of her petticoat and she felt as gay as a cricket.

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On her way back she met the Prince, who pulled up his horse and scowled at her, that she might not see the love in his eyes. Her head was all over little golden curls that shone in the sunlight.

"What have you done with your hair?" he asked.

"What have you done with the osiers and the feathers?" she asked in return, and laughed.

"Are you starving yet?"

"Far from it. I am richer than I ever was," and she shook her pocket till all the gold danced; for she feared nothing. But it was a foolish thing to do, for in a moment he had whipped out his sword and cut the pocket clean from the petticoat.

"Now will you marry me?" he asked, and held the pocket high, and rattled the gold.

"Not I," she said; "if you are so poor that you'd have to live on your wife's earnings." And went her way singing.

The Prince was ashamed of himself. He had never felt like it before and it was very uncomfortable; it made him feel all tired and hot. It was all the Goose Girl's fault, of course, and he was very angry. But still he wished he had not stolen her money, and the thought of her little shorn head with its dancing curls made him feel for the first time in his life that he had a heart, and that it hurt.

So wrapped in his shame was the Prince and sitting

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on his horse so loosely, and so heedless of everything that some robbers coming along the road took courage at the sight of him, for he did not look at all terrible as he usually did, and the gold rattled pleasantly. They had passed him many times before and kept their distance; but now they were emboldened to fall upon him, and so sudden was the attack that he was cast from his horse, the gold was gone, and he bound and gagged before he had thought to resist. Such a poor thing can shame make of any one of us.

Before they had finished Sable had galloped away. "Shall we ride after him?" asked one of the robbers.

"No, no," answered the others. "He is too well known and we should surely be caught." So they mounted their horses and went off, leaving the Prince bound and more ashamed of himself than ever. But Sable had galloped straight to the Goose Girl's cottage, and struck at the door with his hoof.

When Erith opened the door, she was amazed to see the horse without his master. He muzzled his soft nose over her neck and hand, then trotted a little distance, then neighed as if to call her and returned. This he did several times.

"There must be something wrong," thought the girl; and she put her foot in the stirrup and leapt to the saddle.

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"Go like the wind," she whispered, leaning along his neck with one little hand round his ear. And like the wind he went.

Now the robbers had not much rope to spare, so they had bound the Prince kneeling with his arms pulled back and tied to his ankles behind him. And mighty uncomfortable it was. Besides they had stuck one of their own foul handkerchiefs in his mouth and tied another across and around it.

"Anyone who finds me will make a fine mock of me," thought the Prince. And he seemed to burn with rage and shame.

But when the Goose Girl drew up beside him *she* did not laugh, rather gave a little moan of pity, for the robbers had struck him wantonly over the head and the blood which he could not reach to staunch ran down over his face and eyes.

In a moment she was to the ground, had whipped out the little knife which she still carried in her belt, and cut the bandage and drew the gag from his mouth.

She was turning to the ropes round the wrists and ankles then, when—"Stop!" said the Prince.

Then, "Will you marry me, Erith?"

"It's a queer time to be asking that," replied the Goose Girl.

"You charged me to ask on my knees," answered

the Prince dryly, "and I am here. Will you marry me now?"

"An' it please you," corrected she, with calm blue eyes.

"An' it please you, dear heart," said he, almost meekly. "And we will not be living on your money, for it is all gone."

"Well, I don't mind if I do," answered the Goose Girl, and cut the ropes.

So they were trothed and kissed one another. And the Prince put her on the front of his own horse, and rode with her to the court, where he told the Queen all that had happened, and charged her, by her friendship, to get all manner of beautiful raiment and jewels ready and command a great feast that he might marry the Goose Girl one week from that day, she consenting.

It was the sunniest day ever known in all the world, and the gayest wedding and the fairest bride. And the feasting and dancing lasted for seven days, and there was none in the whole country who went hungry or without a share of the pleasures.

On the seventh day the Prince took his bride back to his own kingdom. They would have no coach, but rode Sable over the hills and pastures and across the Common where the geese had once fed, and over the drawbridge and home.

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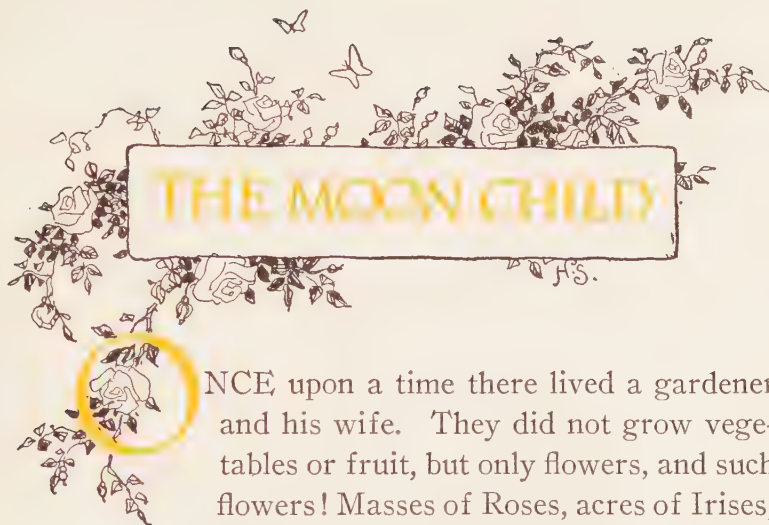
The new Princess had little golden slippers on her feet now, and a robe of rose silk all embroidered with pearls, and a cloak of ermine. But her head was bare, with no crown save that of short golden curls like the head of a wee boy whom I know—and you know.



THE MOON CHILD



Holding one of Gloire's pink feet and kissing it as the baby rode astride upon its father's shoulders



ONCE upon a time there lived a gardener and his wife. They did not grow vegetables or fruit, but only flowers, and such flowers! Masses of Roses, acres of Irises, highlands blue with Hyacinth, lowlands white with Lilies, forests of Ferns; for they lived on an island, and the whole island was one great garden which belonged to them. Sometimes the ships which came sailing past with white wings would mark it on their charts as "The Blue Isle" because they passed it when the Hyacinths were out; but perhaps when they came again it was the time of Irises, and they had to re-call it "The Purple Isle"; or the Rosemary and Thyme, the Lavender and Mignonette were so sweet that the wind was perfumed for miles and miles out to sea, and they would christen it again "The Fragrant Isle."

The man and his wife were very happy with their flowers but for one thing—they had no child, though

they had been married for many, many years. Indeed, the little sprig of orange blossom that they had planted on their wedding day was grown into quite a big tree, and was covered with golden fruit by the time that, at last, they had a little baby girl born to them.

She was born in the time of roses and that same night every bud on the trees burst into bloom—to show that she was a Rose Child. And her cheeks were pink roses, and her lips were one red bud, and her tiny head was like a Cloth of Gold rose, and her tiny hand like the buds of the white Bride rose, and her nose just one silly little upturned petal.

They christened her Gloire Dijon after their favourite rose. Of course, they did not call her that, but only just Gloire, or Glory. Every day she grew more beautiful and she was so good that the gardener's wife was able to get through the work of her home quite easily each morning, and have plenty of time left to laugh and play with her baby. Not that she needed amusing; for though she would sometimes seem a little restless when she was indoors, her mother only had to put her in her cradle out among the roses and she would lie there hour after hour, cooing to them and smiling up at them so contentedly that both her parents believed that she and the roses really talked to each other.

The most extraordinary thing was that the roses bloomed all that year; as soon as one blossom faded

another seemed to spring up in its place, even all through the winter, so that the place came to be permanently marked on the map as "The Rosy Isle"; while the sailors really believed that no winter would ever be found there any more. Indeed, the island would soon have been overrun by chilly people who wanted a year of entire summer weather if the roses had not suddenly faded, all in one night.

The gardener had been so busy among his flowers that he had got home very late for his tea. Indeed, the moon was shining, and his wife was sitting in the porch with Gloire asleep in her lap when he came up the path.

He kissed them both; then his wife laid the sleeping child very gently in the cradle which stood there.

"She will sleep quite quietly while I am getting your supper," she said, "and it is cooler for her out here than indoors." So they left her and went in to the meal that was all ready waiting, the gardener with his arm round his wife, and her head, like a flower, leaning against his shoulder; for they loved each other very dearly and life was sweet as the scent of the flowers that they grew.

They were some time over their meal, for the man had been working hard, and was hungry; but at last they rose.

"There is no warm water for the plates and cups;

I will take them to the spring outside the back door and wash them while you undress Gloire," said the gardener, and so she went outside to her baby.

The child was sitting up in its cradle with outstretched arms, cooing and laughing very happily, but as the Mother stooped to it she felt a shock of something like fear.

Little Gloire seemed to have grown strangely white, or was it the moonlight? Her eyes seemed very large, her hair, too, did not look the same, for it had always curled, and now it lay over her little head, thin and light and straight as thistledown.

The woman lifted the child from its cradle and held it well out into the moonlight to see it better. The baby almost leapt from her arms and laughed with joy, a shrill little laugh very different from Gloire's usual contented chuckle, and how light she felt, too.

The gardener's wife was just about to call to her husband when he came running out with a very scared face.

"The spring has run dry," he said; "there is not a drop of water coming out of the ground, and all the roses are dead. And look here and here and here, wife," he pointed to the bushes on either side of the porch and the creeping rose that hung over it; "these are dead also. What a strange perfume, too; like the dried leaves you keep in the jar on the mantel shelf. Why, all

the roses must be dead in the fields and hedgerow. I must go and see."

"But our child!" cried the woman, with her hand on his arm, for he was just running off to look at the distant roses. "Look at our child."

"She is all right," said the man; "only the moonlight makes her seem pale. Let me go."

"Do not go, husband; I am frightened. Stay while I undress her, and let us all go to bed, for somehow I dare not stay alone to-night."

The man did as he was asked, for, after all, if the roses were really dead he could not do them any good, and his wife needed him. When the candle was lighted and the child undressed he was glad he had remained, for she looked very ill and quite changed, lying very still and whimpering without ceasing.

"We will send for the doctor in the morning if she is not better," he said. "Do not be frightened, dear wife." Then, as soon as the light was out, he gathered them both in his strong arms.

But now that there was only the Moonlight in the room the baby began to laugh and dance again, till they could scarcely bear her antics. They were very, very tired and somehow their love for her did not seem as strong and warm as it had always been, though they were uneasy and anxious.

At last they put her at the foot of the bed, where

she sat dancing her little feet and laughing; and the gardener fell asleep, completely exhausted, while his wife lay and wept till near morning she too dropped asleep.

In the morning when they awoke at sunrise the baby was mercifully asleep and slept the greater part of the day, whining and whimpering and refusing all food when she awoke, and looking more and more white and puny and large-eyed. Only at night would she take food; and indeed if they had not fed her then she would have died of sheer starvation. As it was she nearly killed the gardener and his wife, for they had no time to sleep in the day and at night she would give them no rest.

Every time a ship came in sight the gardener would hoist a flag of distress, then put out his little boat and ask if a Doctor were on board, and if so, would he come out and see the baby, and tell them what its strange illness was. A great many ships sailed that way and soon the Doctors got to hear of the strange white baby which would only eat or drink when it was night time. They brought it all sorts of wonderful medicines from all sorts of different places, till the little home was quite littered up with empty bottles; but none of them did her any good at all. And the roses would not bloom, though the trees were still alive, and the stream would not flow, so that all the flowers suffered; as they—like the gar-

dener and his wife—had to depend upon the rain alone for water. And that glad Island became a sad Island, for all the flowers drooped, and the gardener's hair grew grey, and his wife's eyes grew dim; and they were both so tired that they were sometimes quite cross, even with each other, a thing that had never, never happened before.

At last the time came when the baby was two years old. Of course, she could walk, but she did not move all day, just lay and slept and whimpered and turned over and slept again. Only at night she ran and danced—most wildly if the moon was shining—and demanded food and every bit of attention that most children need in the day time.

Then at last a strange ship with silken sails of orange colour came in sight and the man hailed it. They had really given up asking for Doctors, it seemed no use at all; but somehow this ship looked so different that they thought they would try once again.

"We have no Doctor on board," said the Captain, when the man went out in his little boat; "but we have a wise woman who is a hundred thousand years old and sailed these seas before your island was ever even thought of."

"Ask her if she will come and see my child," pleaded the man.

The Captain went, but returned saying the old

woman would not go. They could bring the child to her if they liked, but they must be quick, for they were sailing round the world and if they did not move quicker than it did they would never get any further.

The man rowed back as fast as possible and hurried his wife and child into the boat, not even letting them wait for their hats. The woman did not mind the sun, for she loved brightness and warmth; but she was obliged to turn her apron over the face of the sleeping child as it lay in her lap, it grew so white and panted so.

Directly they stepped on board, the Captain hurried them down to the cabin where the old, old woman was.

You have never seen anything so old. Her back was bent so that her chin would have touched her feet, if it had not turned up so that it almost joined her hawk-like nose, and her hands were like claws, and her skin all cracked with wrinkles. She looked like some old piece of wood, warped out of all shape by sun and rain. But her eyes were bright.

"Bring the child here," she said, in a voice which seemed tired with years.

The gardener's wife was trembling so that her husband took the sleeping baby from her arms, and held it near to the old woman, who put out one skinny finger and gave it a sharp poke.

The baby stirred and whimpered, opened its eyes the tiniest bit, and then shut them tight again.

"But," snapped the old woman, "that's not a human child."

"What?" cried the man and his wife, both at once.

"Are you deaf?" replied the old woman rudely. "That's not a human child, do you hear me now? That is a moon child."

"But it's our baby."

"There you're wrong. It's not; it could not be. What was your baby like when first it was born?"

"It was lovely," sighed the woman.

"With pink cheeks," put in the man.

"And red lips."

"And blue eyes."

"And the sweetest laugh."

"The soundest baby."

"Well," said the old, old woman, "that doesn't describe this brat. Tell me how she came like this."

"We left her in the porch in her cradle one night when we went to tea. When we came out we saw she looked very white and strange. We merely thought she was not quite well; but she has been like this ever since, and only wakes at night."

"What sort of night was it?"

"Oh, the most lovely moonlight night," cried the woman.

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"Ah, there you are. And have the flowers flourished in your garden since?"

"No, they have all drooped, and no roses at all have bloomed. Only the moon-flower spread over everything. It takes my husband all his time to keep it cut away."

"I thought as much. Now, you must do exactly as I tell you if you wish to have your own child back again; for it is very clear to me that she was stolen away by the Moon people, who love earth children, and left one of their own in her place.

"The first night when the moon is quite, quite full, you must put the changeling in the garden, tied to its cradle so that it cannot get out, and free from the shade of any trees. Do you understand?"

"Yes," answered the man and his wife, both in one breath.

"Then you must place on the ground before her cakes and honey and sweet wine in an open bowl; and you must make a fire of nutmegs and cloves and cinnamon, and light it—stirring it till it sends up a little pillar of smoke. Then hide behind a bush or tree, careful that no scrap of even your clothes is out of the shadow.

"Soon the Moon people will smell the sweet scent and will come down to enjoy it. They will see the cake and honey and wine and alight on the earth and eat and drink. Then you must run out with a great shooping and

shouting such as you use to frighten birds, when they will all fly away, all, that is, except the mother of the changeling, who will have seen her child and linger near it; her you must catch and tie to a tree, and leave her and the changeling there the whole of the next day. At night the Moon people will come again and entice you to give them back their companion; then you must demand your child in exchange, and not loosen the Moon woman's bonds till you actually have her in your arms."

The gardener and his wife listened very carefully, and promised they would do all they were told; and the old, old woman gave them a strangely shaped bottle of wine, and small cakes with sweet seeds on them, and bade them good-bye; nor would she take any reward for her trouble, for she was very, very old and she knew that those who are paid for the good they do are, in the end, the poorest.

Next night the gardener and his wife did exactly as they were told, placing the honey and cakes and wine round the changeling's cradle and lighting the fire, then hiding themselves.

The smoke from the fire rose up in a blue pillar across the face of the Moon.

Soon shapes like wisps of vapour began to show themselves and flock earthwards. It was the Moon people, very tall and slender, with long arms and long, oval

faces and large, light-coloured eyes, hair light and straight as thistledown.

When they saw the food that was set for them, they were delighted, and began to eat and drink, though they could not lift the bowl of wine to their transparent heads, but had to kneel and lap like dogs, all except the Mother of the changeling, who was bending over her child.

Then the man and his wife ran out, shooin' and shouting, and all the Moon people floated away, all but the Moon Mother, who lingered kissing her babe, and her they caught.

First they tried to tie her with cords, but it was of no use, for she was so slender and shadow-like that the cords seemed to cut through her and would not hold.

"Run, wifey," said the man, "and bring me basting such as we tie the flowers with."

So they tied her with basting. And the wife put the child into her arms, knowing she longed for it; and they moistened her lips with wine and gave her cakes to eat, and left her so, tied to an old thorn tree. For the Moon had set and they knew that her own people would not come back to her that night.

Next day she drooped, and was so white, that they had to take the child from her and tie her so that she might lie down beside it, and make a shelter of leaves over her; for they feared she might die before the evening came.

However, when the sun sank she revived, so that they raised her and tied her afresh with the child in her arms; then as the Moon rose they lit the scented fire once more.

Moon people came down almost at once, like a cloud; and, not seeming to regard either the man or his wife, flocked round their companion, trying to undo her bonds, but their fingers were too weak. So they wept and wailed and caught at the basting, and tore at it with their shadow hands, but could do nothing.

"Bring us back our child," said the gardener, "and we will let both the Moon woman and the changeling go free."

They looked at him as he spoke with sad, wild eyes, then turned again to the bonds which held the captive and tore and tore; but all to no avail. Then she spoke, entreating them to do as the man asked them, and let her and her child free; for after all it was her own, and she loved it best.

Then the Moon people gathered and spoke together, and there was a sound of shadow weeping.

"Loose the bonds first, oh man," said one; "and we will bring you back the child."

"No," answered the man; "bring the child first and after that I will loose the bonds."

Then they floated away, weeping and sighing.

After a while they appeared in sight again, far up

in the sky, with something among them that glowed like gold.

"See, ah, see, husband, that is the top of our child's golden head," cried the woman.

Then came a flush of pink like the dawn and that was Gloire's cheeks.

Then a rose bud, red even in the moonlight, and that was Gloire's mouth.

And whiteness, that was Gloire's dear body.

And, oh! such sweetness as the mother and father caught her between them, only the Moon people wept for the warmth and life that had been so dear to them.

Then the man cut the bonds which held the Moon woman and her child, and they all gathered round Gloire and kissed her with kisses light as air, and departed weeping; only the Moon woman and her child did not weep, for they loved each other best.

Then the gardener lifted Gloire on his back and she laughed and crowed and caught at his hair just as she used to do, for all that year she had not grown any more, or learned to walk any better, or talk more plainly than with her old baby "Mum, Mum," and "Dad, Dad," though she was fat and fair and merry as she had ever been.

So Gloire was always one year older than she seemed, or one year younger than she was—however you like to put it.

"What a sweet scent, husband," said the woman as they walked back to the house, she holding one of Gloire's pink feet to her cheek and kissing it as the baby rode astride upon its father's shoulders.

"It's the roses, wife; it's the roses. See how they are all abloom again." And so they were—cream and pink and gold in the dawn, that was fast chasing the moonlight away from the topmost peak of the hyacinth height.

"We must give Gloire some supper," said the woman; and the man laughed.

"We must give Gloire some breakfast," he said, for the night was past. And he took the kettle from the hob and flung open the back door to go and draw some water out of the pool he had dug to catch the rain. But there was no need for it any more.

For the spring was dancing and gurgling in the sunlight, and running away, down all the little streamways it had once dug for itself to tell good news to its friends the flowers.

And so it was that for ever and ever the roses bloomed, and Gloire grew to be the loveliest woman in the whole world and married a King, and had a wee son whom she named Miguel, and of whom I will tell you one day.



THE SIX SLIPPERS AND THE
FAIRY PIPER



The fairy piper moved across the lawn and the sisters danced after him

THE SIX SLIPPERS ^{AND} THE FAIRY PIPER

THERE once lived a little boy named Brian, who had three sisters, and their names were Sylvia and Cynthia and Crystobel. The place where they lived was called Lymere, and over all the country side these sisters were known as "The Three Lilies of Lymere," because they were so beautiful, so slender and tall, with such white skins and long yellow hair; but Brian was called "The Brown Boy of Lymere," because his skin was dark and his great eyes so deep and brown, like the deep hollows in the streams where the trout love to lie.

Brian's three sisters were all much older than he was, and the Lord of Lymere was a great lord, so that many brave and noble men came to seek them in marriage. But the Three Lilies of Lymere would have none of them and loved their own little brother better than anyone else in the world, while next to him they loved best to amuse themselves, to dance and to sing, and to be loved without loving.

All round the wide park which encircled Lymere lay

pasture land and little clusters of cottages and farms. And beyond this lay softly rounded hills, and beyond the hills to the west Fairyland.

Often when the west wind blew at evening time—when all the noise and bustle of the day was silenced—over the hills would come the sound of fairy music, shrill and sweet. Then all the good people of the village would gather the children from their twilight games in the street, and would bolt their doors; for none cared to walk abroad for fear that the fairy folk might come dancing down over the hills and make away with them.

The three sisters were different, though, from all the village people. They could not lie abed when the fairy pipers played; indeed they would have been out dancing with the winds on the lawn, where the garden lilies swayed, but that Brian was always frightened for them and clung to them with such tears, that the most they could do was to open their chamber windows wide and stand listening, with feet and hearts that danced, and blood in their veins that was warm and wild to be gone. Some old village dame had once said that their great, great grandmother had been a fairy woman, so perhaps that was the reason why the shrill sweet pipes seemed to call them so that they felt no fear.

Brian's mother was dead, and his father often away at the court of the King—for he was a very great lord—and though he was fond of his little son and his

daughters he had very little time for them. Brian and his sisters used to envy the village children who ran to meet their fathers as they came home from work each evening, and were caught up on the big, broad shoulders and tossed high in the air. Still more used they to envy the children their mothers, in whose arms they could always find comfort when their little world went wrong, their toys were broken, or their pets died. But excepting for the servants and their tutor and governesses, Brian and his sisters were quite alone; perhaps that is why they thought so much of the fairy music.

Well, one summer evening they had all finished their supper and the three sisters were having a game of ball in the garden with Brian, who was shrieking with delight, and darting hither and thither after the great bouncing ball which his sisters threw for him. So excited was he that soon they, too, caught his merry mood, and flew round the lawn, bouncing the great ball; while Brian darted like a little brown moth from one to another, trying to catch it from them.

The three sisters were very light of foot, for they were famous dancers throughout all the land—the land which lay to the east, the land of ordinary people. Their little white-shod feet seemed scarcely to touch the ground; while their thin white dresses and golden hair flew out in a cloud behind them as they ran and laughed and called to one another and to Brian.

After a while it grew too dark to catch the ball any more, and the players all stopped, breathless, gathered in the centre of the lawn, still shaken by their laughter.

"Where is the ball?" said Sylvia.

"I must have thrown it into the moon," laughed Cynthia.

"Or Brian must have swallowed it," mocked Crystal.

"Brian, Brian, where is the ball?"

But Brian, who was sitting on the ground in their midst, did not join in their laughter. The grey of the evening seemed to have gathered so quickly around him that he was frightened—he scarcely knew why—and began to cry, for he was a very wee boy, you know, only five years old.

The three sisters gathered round their little brother at once.

"Never mind, dear wee man," they cried, dropping on their knees at his side and circling him with their arms. "Never mind, sweetheart, we will find the stupid old ball to-morrow." But Brian only cried the more. They did not understand; it was not the ball he wanted; he was just frightened, that was all; and doubly frightened because he did not know what he feared.

Suddenly he stopped crying, all the tears which were just ready to fall gathering like lakes in his brown eyes. He held up his tiny finger——

SIX SLIPPERS AND FAIRY PIPER III

"Listen! Listen!"

The sisters knelt upright and shook back the golden hair from their ears.

"Listen! Listen!" repeated Brian.

From over the hills came the sound of fairy music, sweet and shrill. Brian jumped up, too frightened even to cry, and caught at his sisters' white skirts.

"Come, oh, come quick, back to the house; oh, do come quick, quick!" And he pulled at their hands, then loosened them and ran a little to see if they were following; then raced back again and caught Crystobel's skirt round him, trying at once to cover his face and pull her along with him.

"Oh, Sylvia, Cynthia and Crystobel, come quick, quick!" he cried again, beside himself with fear.

But the three sisters never moved, only their feet beat time to the music upon the grass.

The moon rose and shone so that it was as bright as day, and the sound of the pipes seemed to grow clearer and yet more clear.

Over the hills and through the pastures came the shrill, sweet sound, so near that it seemed like a nightingale in the trees at the very garden's edge.

Nearer and nearer, sweeter and sweeter.

Then across the lawn came the piper, with the moonlight bright upon his silver pipes.

He stood beneath the great oak tree in the middle

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of the lawn. Brian could see him plainly. He was all dressed in grey, with a grey cap and grey pigeon wings at either side of it; his shoes were silver, and the fingers that danced upon his pipes, long and white as milk.

First he played a weeping tune, and the sisters and brother clung together and wept, and the dew dropped from the trees in great tears and all the flowers in the garden bent their heads and wept, too.

Then he played a laughing tune, and they all laughed; even Brian laughed, though he was still frightened. And the laughter ran through the garden like the wind, and shook the trees till the trees laughed, too, and raced across the pastures and through the village, so that all the children in their beds laughed, and the mothers bending over their mending and the fathers smoking their pipes laughed, too, though they did not know why.

Then the fairy man played the dancing tune, and the trees began to sway to it, and the three sisters began to dance. Brian did not dance; he ran from one to another, trying to catch their flying raiment, but could not; so he sat on the ground and cried, while they danced up and down with twinkling, flying feet as light as air.

Then the fairy piper moved away from the trees and across the lawn, and the sisters danced after him.

Brian caught at them as they passed.

"Oh, Sylvia, Sylvia, stop!" But Sylvia danced on.

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"Cynthia! Cynthia!" But Cynthia was gone, too.

Then Crystobel—"Oh, Crystobel; dear, darling Crystobel!" wailed Brian, for he loved his youngest sister best of all the three. But, now, she heeded him not at all. Her white robe was pulled from between his tiny fingers, and she was away with the other two, flying after the piper with his piping.

Brian saw their white frocks glinting through the shrubbery; saw them like moths flitting across the pastures; like floating strands of thistledown up the distant hills, and then they were gone. But the music floated full and fair from the land beyond.

There was a fine fuss in the castle, you may be sure, when Brian dragged himself up the steps, blinded with weeping, and told them between his sobs, as best he could in his baby way, what had happened.

The tutor and governesses were in a great fright when they heard, as you may guess, for what would the great lord say when he returned and found that his daughters were gone? All the servants and the grooms and the gardeners were sent off with lanterns to search for the three Lilies of Lymere, but as none of them dared to cross the western hills that bordered the fairy-land, of course they neither saw nor heard anything of them.

The next day and the next, and the next, it was all the same; nowhere could any trace be found of the

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sisters. Only one of the searchers had been bolder than the rest and climbed at night to the top of the hill, and saw the lights below in the fairy town and heard the music of the pipes. He would have gone down, he said, but suddenly there had been a sound of laughter all round him, and though he could see no one he had been buffeted and hit and pushed here and there with invisible hands. No one could stand that, and he had been so frightened that he had turned and run down the hill as fast as his legs would carry him; so fast, indeed, that they had run away with him and he had pitched into a bramble bush at the bottom. A nice state he had been in when he at last got free—all his clothes torn, and scratched and bleeding from head to foot.

"No more interfering with the fairy folk for me," said the man. "It ain't good enough!" And all the others had agreed with him, so that none could be found to search further for the "Three Lilies of Lymere." And the tutors and the governesses stayed at home and shook in their shoes at the thought of what the great lord would say when he came back. It never entered into their heads to go themselves; they were there to teach others what to do; not to do anything themselves.

After this Brian cried so, all day and every day, for his dear sisters, that generally, by the time night came, he slept soundly enough, quite worn out with sorrow.

But one night, when his room was flooded with

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bright moonlight, he was awakened by a funny little sound.

Tipitty, tipitty, tipitty, tip! Tipitty, tipitty, tip!

Brian raised himself to his elbow and looked on the floor, where the noise seemed to come from.

There in the moonlight were six white mice dancing.

It was the prettiest sight you could well imagine; here and there they skipped as gay as gay could be. They danced in pairs, one never very far from its fellow, though sometimes it seemed as if two pairs would dance together, and sometimes all three pairs.

Brian slipped from his bed. If only, only he could catch one of the darling little things, what a charming pet it would make. He had not felt so pleased and excited since his sisters had followed the fairy piper.

There was an empty bowl standing on the table by Brian's little bed, out of which he had drunk his milk before settling to sleep. He lifted the bowl very quietly. It would just do to pop over one of those little dancers, or even a pair, if they happened to be dancing very close together.

The child dropped to his knees and crept with the greatest care across the floor, then waited, almost breathless. At last one pair of little dancers skipped quite, quite close to him. He raised the bowl, leant forward, and in another moment he would have had them both when—Brian gave a cry of surprise.

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They were not mice at all. They were little white shoes, such as his sisters had always worn.

He knelt there on the floor, and it seemed as if the shoes came and danced quite close under his eyes so that he might see them better.

One pair had sparkling diamonds for buckles. He remembered how Sylvia had amused him one evening by dancing in the lamplight, while he had tried to catch the flashing rays that glanced from them.

Another pair had pearls for buckles. Crystobel had loved pearls, he remembered; she called them "Angels' tears," and would have no other jewels, even as shoe buckles.

The third pair of shoes had golden bows. These, Cynthia, he remembered, had fashioned, laughing, out of a lock of her own gold hair.

There was no doubt that they were the slippers of the "Three Lilies of Lymere."

It seemed almost as if the little white dancing shoes knew what he was thinking of, for they ranged themselves up in a row just in front of him and waited a little.

Then they danced off to the door, waited there a moment, and danced back to him; this they did several times.

"They want me to follow them," thought Brian,

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and, jumping up, pulled on his dressing gown and his little woolly bedroom slippers.

The shoes skipped off to the door again, and Brian followed.

Down the great stone staircase, "Tipitty, tipitty, tip!"

Over the lawn, drenched with dew, and sweet with the scent of flowers.

Along the path which led through the thick shrubbery.

Across the pasture, where Brian lost one of his little shoes in a swamp.

A lamb lay in the deep grass. "Wait, little fellow lamb, and I will come too," it cried, and jumping up ran to Brian and pushed its nose within his hand.

Its breath was sweet; it was warm and soft and comforting, and Brian flung his arms round it as it trotted by his side.

"Thank you, brother," said he.

Through the villages they went, where the houses were all asleep, not a light in the windows. How surprised anyone would have been if he had peeped out and seen six white shoes and a child with a lamb going down the quiet streets; but no one stirred.

Up the hill danced the white shoes lightly; up the hill toiled Brian, very, very tired, and glad to lean on the little lamb, who clambered so sturdily upwards.

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A bramble caught Brian's other shoe, and tore his foot cruelly so that it bled.

"That was an ill deed, brother bramble," said the lamb. "You shall bear no fruit this year."

Poor little Brian, he was so tired, his foot was sore, his head dizzy with climbing. But he never even thought of turning back, and at last the top of the hill was reached.

The fairy music was shrill and sweet, and as they descended the western side they could see the lights sparkle in the fairy town.

"Get on my back, little fellow lamb," said Brian's companion, "and no one will hurt you."

So Brian mounted on the lamb's back and they passed down the hill and into the town, the shoes dancing in front of them.

Have you ever been to a fairy town?

In the daytime it is quiet and dull enough, "a forest of toadstools and bracken" you might say. But at night it wakes up and everything is very different.

There were a hundred thousand lights, and the music of a hundred thousand pipes.

There were wide streets down which the fairies danced and drove in their fairy coaches; and there were houses with pretty peaked roofs, and pagodas with tinkling bells on top, and sparkling fountains and gardens.

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Brian, mounted on the lamb, followed the dancing shoes, and no one seemed inclined to hurt them; now and then someone tossed a rose at him, when there was a shriek of elfin laughter; and one imp stopped in passing and pinched Brian's bare toes. But the lamb turned and looked at him very gravely and very severely, and he ran away crying.

Then down the main street came streaming a hundred hundred of flower fairies, each fairy like a flower, only with feet and hands and faces like people, and very lovely.

They danced and whirled like leaves driven by the wind.

Then came other pipers, piping.

Then came the Three Lilies of Lymere dancing with bare feet, and the grey Piper.

"Sylvia! Cynthia!" cried Brian; then, "Crystobel! dear, darling Crystobel!" And he flung himself off the lamb to follow them. But in a moment the fairies were on him. They caught at his dressing-gown and night-gown; they drew themselves up by his brown curls, and they hung round his ankles to pull him to the ground.

But luckily he had not moved far. He flung out his hand, and caught the white fleece of the lamb and drew himself on its back again. Upon which the fairies all fell away at once. It seemed as if he was safe there.

"They're going away again," wailed the wee boy.

"They did not even stop when I called to them. Oh dear, oh dear, what shall I do?"

"Do not cry, little brother," answered the lamb. "Your sisters neither saw nor heard you, for the fairy piper was leading them, and their eyes and their ears, as well as their dancing feet, were his. But when morning breaks, his power will be over for one night more; and your sisters will be weeping—as they have wept each day in fairyland—for you and for their home."

"Why did they not come back?" asked Brian wonderingly.

"No one can ever return from the land beyond the hills, excepting the one they love most in the world come to fetch them; for they cannot stray outside the circle that the fairies have drawn round them and their town. Even in the day, when there seems nothing but bracken and toadstools; if they try to pass the bracken grows as high as forest trees, and thick as a great wall in front of them, and the toadstools grow to towers right in their path. Again and again have they tried, but the walls and the towers have risen up before them in every place where they have thought to pass.

"Stoop down now, little brother, and pick up the six white shoes, which await us, and hide them in your bosom. Directly the first cock crows all the fairies will vanish and we will find the Three Lilies of Lymere sit-

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ting among the toadstools crying for their home and for you.”

Brian did as he was told, and it seemed as if each shoe leaped into his hand as he stooped to it.

Then the lamb moved on a little to the place where the dancing was.

The three sisters were indeed like lilies as they danced, fair and slender, and tall and white, with flying golden hair; and the fairies like wind-blown leaves around them.

There was never such dancing in all the world; such mad, beautiful dancing; such a flying of feet, such a race of pipes piping. But Brian could not look. They did not seem like his sisters who danced so, for he had never seen them without love for him in their faces.

“The Eastern sky is grey,” whispered the lamb.

Then——

“The Eastern sky is pink!”

Then——“Hark!”

Shrill and clear from the farms in the pasture land came the first crow of the cock.

The lights vanished, as if day had flung her cap over them all at once. The pipers ceased. The fairies were gone.

There was only a sad, dreary common remaining, with faded bracken and broken toadstools and grey hills around. And in the midst of the common sat the Three

Lilies of Lymere with their yellow hair over their faces, weeping.

"Sylvia!" cried Brian. "Cynthia!" Then:—"Dear, darling Crystobel!"

Before they could rise he was upon them, warm and human and loving. His rosy face all aglow, his brown eyes shining. One little soft arm for Sylvia's neck, the other for Cynthia's, and his red, red mouth for Crystobel, laughing and crying and laughing again all at once.

Then he dragged them to their feet, the wee, eager boy, and flung their white slippers down before them. "Come quick, quick!" he cried, and knelt to slip Crystobel's heel into hers, and kissed the white insteps of the other two.

"Ah, brave little shoes," cried Cynthia; "when we could not pass the walls and the towers, little brother, we flung them over. We had longed, and longed, and longed so for you and our home, that we were all longing even down to our feet and into our shoes; and once free the longing led them till they danced away to you, dear wee brother; dear, good little shoes!"

"And the dear little lamb," said Brian. "See, sisters, if it had not been for this little brother of mine I could never have passed among the fairies. Kiss him, Crystobel."

Then Crystobel kissed the lamb, between his wise,

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sad eyes, and the white wool divided into brown curls and lay on either side of a smooth white forehead.

Then she kissed his little black-lipped mouth and it became warm and red beneath hers.

"Little brother," cried Brian, "you are growing strangely tall. Little brother——" then stopped in sheer surprise. But Crystobel hid her face in her hands and shook her long hair over her blushing cheeks, for the lamb was a lamb no longer, but a tall young lord, as fair a man as the sisters were fair maidens.

"I have found two fairylands to-night," he said, and looked full at Crystobel.

But Brian was tired, for he was only a wee, wee boy, and he began to cry. Do you wonder? He had walked far. He had been up all night. His foot pained him. It seemed years and years ago since he had drunk his last bowl of milk. And dear, darling Crystobel did not seem to want him very much after all.

"I want my lamb," he cried. "I want my dear, little brother lamb to carry me home."

Oh, yes! then Crystobel noticed him, you may be sure, and him only, and Sylvia and Cynthia, and they kissed all his tears away.

"I am still your brother, dear one," said the young man, and gathered Brian up in his arms, with Crystobel's hand, too, that he would not loose from his tiny

fingers. And Cynthia held the other hand, and Sylvia nursed the poor, wounded foot in her palm.

So the Three Lilies of Lymere, and the wee Brown Boy of Lymere, and the young lord, whose name was Delmar, the Lord of Delmarin—and who had been under the spell of the fairies also—went over the hills and the pastures and through the lawns and shrubberies back to Lymere.

And it was Brian who had saved them all, little, wee, weary Brian. And he had found a new brother also; so had the other two Lilies of Lymere. Only Crystobel, the youngest and dearest, had found what is better and dearer far, a lover.

Did she marry him? Of course she married him. I never thought of writing it down, because I was sure you would know. It is what always happens when the world is young. And they lived happily ever after, too, which does not always happen, though it ought to.



THE WILD WOODLAND HEART



It was the wedding day of the fairy Princess



The WILD-WOODLAND HEART

HERE are green rings to be seen sometimes in the meadows—green beyond all the greenness that lies beyond outside them. The grass is sweet and fine, also, beyond all other, yet the cattle do not eat it, nor do they ever step within these rings, for they know that they belong to the fairies. All animals who live out of doors night and day see the fairies dance, and could tell you all about it if they liked, but they will not. They even pretend they do not understand our language—for it is all pretence, you know.

We think we are masters of all that is in the world. But at night we are shut up in boxes called houses, where even the light of the moon cannot come, and are like dead things till morning. Then the world is free—free of us and all our silly hum-drum ways; then the rest of the world really lives, the wild wood people most of all.

We may make the horse work for us during the day; but at night if he is free in the meadows he is free indeed. We do not know what he thinks or feels or

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does. He may be drawing loads of bricks all day, very patient and gentle, and rather sad; but at night, why, the Queen of the fairies may be riding between his ears and whispering secrets there. And the sheep that seem so simple and dull all day—what wonders they must hear whispered under their noses as they crop the damp grass.

And the wild people of the woods. The slim, bright-eyed stout and weasel, and the little, plump, grey field mouse, and the rabbits with their white tails, and the moles and the night moths. Why, they all know and love a world to which we are quite strangers. But I, though I am only a human, can tell you this: at two o'clock each night the world gives itself a quiet shake to hump off all the weariness and worries of the day before. We—little boys and girls and all—turn in our beds and sleep on. But the night people shake all their troubles off their shoulders then and are clear of sorrow and free from the new griefs or joys that may come to us during the next twenty-four hours. That's the best of being one of the night people, one can just hump off all one's sorrows when the world does—a ton or so of worries makes no difference, and they all drop into the moon, "plump!"

Most things can be turned with advantage. We turn our money in our pockets when the moon is at

her youngest, and we turn all our clouds, too, with the silver lining outwards if we have any sense.

There was once a boy, a good little boy, quiet and old-fashioned—so quiet and old-fashioned in the day—but he had a little, strange, wild heart in his body and he always loved the night people better than the day people, and longed to talk to them and be free in the wood with them, when all the air was damp and sweet at night, and all the tame everyday folk were asleep, and all the wild night people awake; when the trees talked to each other, and the world turned and shook off its worries.

I will tell you how it all came about. When he was a tiny baby his Father had gone to chop wood in the forest and his mother had carried him out with her when she had taken her good man his dinner. After they had talked together a little, and when the man, having finished his meal, went back to his work, the woman laid the baby in a hollow tree which had fallen to the ground, and made him quite a cosy cradle—while she went to get a drink from a pool near by.

As the baby lay asleep in the hollow of the tree a tiny little grey wood mouse had run along the edge of the bark foraging for food. The round red mouth of the baby was wide open.

“That’s a pretty little hole,” thought Master Mouse. “I might find something to eat there, for a sweet scent

comes from it like hyacinths, and hyacinths have roots that are round and good to eat. Anyhow, it is a pretty warm-looking little hole, and might be a good place for me to live when I get a wife. I'll go and see what I can find there." And so he popped into the baby's mouth and scampered down its throat.

Just at that moment the woodcutter's wife came back and saw what happened. She cried out to her husband to tell him and they were both very frightened, fearing that the baby would be sure to die; for when they peeped into its little mouth the mouse was quite out of sight.

They took it to a wise woman at once—for doctors are no good for curing any ill that belongs to the woodland, as they knew quite well.

The wise woman was very, very old and very, very wrinkled; she had lived so long in the woods that she was like them. Her skin was like the bark of an oak tree, her long, matted black locks like the keys on the maple trees; her eyes like elderberries, black and light. Her gown was red-gold, the colour of autumn leaves, and the scent of her was like the scent of the woodlands.

When the woodcutter and his wife told her what had happened, she looked very grave.

"We cannot coax him out, that is certain," she said; "for the wood-mice are the shyest of the wild people. If it were a common house mouse it would not matter

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at all; we could easily entice him up with a little cheese—anyhow he would be of no account, for he lives in a house like a human does; but a wild wood mouse! That is a very different matter!”

She laid her ear to the child's heart and heard a little strange scrittle-scrattle.

“He is scratching to make a nest,” she said. “If he once makes a nest in the child's heart, the child will die. Now, there is only one thing to do.”

Then she told the father to light a fire and put water to boil in a big iron pot, and the mother to nurse the baby and sing to it so that it might keep awake, and its heart would beat double quick to what its heart would if it were asleep; so the mouse might be frightened from starting his nest yet awhile.

Then the wise woman herself went out into the woods and gathered herbs. I must not tell you what they were, for you would want to get some too, and they might harm you; but if ever you swallow a wild mouse or a newt, or a beetle, or a moth, or a baby mole, or an owl's egg with an owl inside it, write and let me know and I will tell you the names of the herbs.

When she returned she threw them into the pot of boiling water that was on the fire, and let them boil and boil till all the water turned green. And then boil and boil till it was all boiled away excepting for one teaspoonful.

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All this time the mother did not stop singing to the baby for one moment. First she sang all the Nursery Rhymes she knew, then all the Hymns she could remember, then, as she could think of nothing more, just mere nonsense like this:

“Hey, sonny, sonny.
My sweetheart, my honey,
Hey ding a ding, ding;
For Mumsey will sing
And the mouse
With his house—
Hey, ding a ding, ding—
Will never be ready.
Beware the unsteady
Jumpitty, jump.
For the thumpitty, thump
Of the heart of my son
Will never be done,
For it's thumping and jumping.
And so, Mr. Mouse,
You cannot build your house,
For you're caught in a trap.
And if baby should nap,
I'll find me a Cat,
The tiniest, teeniest kittenest Cat
And make him eat that,
Mr. Mouse, Mr. Mouse,
Jumpitty, jumpitty, jump,
Thumpitty—thump.
How would you like that,
A kitteny Cat—”

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By this time the old woman had taken the pot off the fire, and pressed the herbs against the side until she pressed out just one single spoonful. Then she blew it till it was cool and she took the little baby from its mother's arms and poured the green stuff down its little red lane, at the bottom of which the mouse was beginning to feel quite distracted with all the noise and bustle.

"I must have got into a town," he thought; "with the carts and carriages and steam engines and trams that my town cousin has told me of." But it was really only the baby's thumpitty bumpitty heart all the time.

"Now take him home," said the wise woman; "but do not give him anything to eat till morning, or the mouse will get it; and by the morning the herb drink will have melted the mouse clean away, all but his little wild woodlander's heart, and nothing I can do will destroy that. It may cause mischief—I hope it won't—but it may."

"What do you mean by that?" asked the father and mother, still feeling frightened and strange.

"Well, you see, the baby boy's heart will be the bigger always; far, far and away the bigger when he is grown up, but not so very, very much the bigger while he is little. But the woodlander's heart, however tiny, is very, very strong, and will always be wild in your boy, till his own heart shall have grown to its full

strength. Wildly during the day and wildest at night will that little mouse heart beat; so that the boy will love to be in the open fields and in the forest, and wild with the wild. During the day you need not fear for him, though you must make him love you very much and give him everything you can to please him, so that his home may be happy, and he may be more inclined to stay there. But at night keep the doors and windows always shut and do not let him out at all when the sun has once set, for at night the call of the wild wood is strongest—and trouble might come of it.”

Well, the woodcutter and his wife took the baby home; and for a while they were very, very anxious about it, but it really did not seem one mite the worse for its strange adventure. Only, if you laid your ear against its little breast, after a while you could hear two hearts beat, one tick, tick, very quiet and small.

After a time the woodcutter and his wife got quite used to the sound of those two hearts. Or rather they quite forgot about them, for the second little quick one could not be heard unless you listened very, very carefully, and the boy was so exactly like other only children—who are quiet and old-fashioned, just because they have no one else to play with—that there really seemed nothing to worry about.

The boy's name was Sylvanus, which is a woodland name, and well suited to the woodcutter's son, but they

called him for short "Sylva," and sometimes his father would laugh and call him "Quicksilver," for though he was so quiet he was very quick in all his movements and seldom still.

One day another woodcutter's wife said:—"That boy of yours is like a little mouse, neighbour; he skips about so swiftly and softly, here, there and everywhere."

Sylvanus' mother had turned pale at her words; she could not bear even the mention of mice, and for anyone to tell her that her boy was like one quite upset her. But that evening he was more noisy than he generally was. They were sitting as usual where the fire and lamps were bright, and the boy had harnessed all the chairs to an upturned table by his father's ropes, and was driving them like horses with such a great "gee-whoa-ing" and shouting and cracking of his little whip, while he looked so boyish and rosy that his mother forgot all her anxiety in watching him; but that was the winter.

When the spring came Sylva grew restless.

All the little shoots which pushed their way out of the earth seemed like tiny, beckoning fingers. The ground grew sweet and moist and warm. The house seemed hateful, and all the birds in the wood called to him:

"Sylva, Sylva, come out."

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And the wood pigeons cried, "Come along do, do—do. Come along do-o-o."

And the little squirrels challenged him as they raced up the trees: "Race us, Sylva, race us!"

And the brook was mad with its dancing, and so were the trees in the wind. And all the dried thistle-down floated away from the thistles, their white was gone, they were young again, crowned with purple.

"I can't—I won't go to school!" said Sylva, and he ran to the wood and pushed his fingers in under the moss till he felt the warm earth; and stared up at the clear red buds of the lime trees above his head, and sucked in the smell of the woods.

"Oh, how can I bear school ever again, with the straight, hard benches, and the dull books, and all the sums that never tell me how many eggs the thrushes lay; and stupid history that never tells me where the squirrels hid last year's nests; and stupid, stupid geography that will not show me the path the old fox has made to his new home this spring. I don't want ever, ever to go to school any more; one only forgets all that the woodland, the wise woodland, teaches one."

"You will never forget," said a tiny, tiny voice at his elbow.

And looking down Sylva saw a small brown mouse sitting on a green moss tussock with a beech nut between its paws.

"You will never forget," said the mouse, "because of the woodlander's heart which you bear in your body."

"What do you mean by that?" asked the boy, and the mouse told him her father had seen it all happen and told her, so that she knew it was true. And then the mouse spoke of a great many things that he had never learnt in school—and last of all she told him about the queer fairy rings.

"The fairies are going to dance to-night," she said. "There is a full moon, and it will be a beautiful sight, for it is the marriage of the Fairy King's daughter. I am collecting beech nuts now for the feast. They have red toadstools for the ladies, very rare and wonderful I can assure you, and honey dew for themselves; but we animals will need something a little more satisfying, so we are all helping. The whole world is in a bustle. Why, the mole has started brushing his coat already. But I don't wonder he is proud of it; I wish I had a coat like that, though, of course, his little piggy eyes make him look very plain. Fancy the hedgehog wanted to be asked—but we really could not have that. He was there on the last great day and he tore all the lace off the fairy princesses' dresses—lace it had taken Mrs. Spider nearly a year to make. No one would dance with him if he did go. Well, I must be off. The ball is to be in the big meadow where the oak trees are. You will come, of course?"

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"I must come!" cried Sylva eagerly.

"Mind you do," said the mouse, and scurried off with the beech nuts. The wood was very quiet and sweet. Sylva laid his chest against the soft green moss and kissed it. It was growing dark, too, and the wild mouse heart began to beat quicker in his heart: "Tick-a-tick, tick."

The boy jumped to his feet and stretched out both arms. How quickly the day had passed there in the woods. Did all days go as swiftly in the woodland world?

The trees began to sway gently to and fro. A silver birch near lifted its fine green frock and there was a twinkle of white stockings. It was surely dancing. And the pines also, their dark mantles dim and soft as velvet, swept to and fro; they were dancing, too, just as other dancers do, swaying from foot to foot, waiting for the music to start.

Then there came a sound of fairy pipes, sweet and shrill, and a hundred hundred glow worms came down the track near to which Sylva lay and ranged themselves on either side.

Then came the fairy pipers blowing on their pipes of silver. They were as high as the span of little Sylva's hand, and they were dressed in green young beech leaves, all silvered with down, as you know they are.

Then came a hundred soldiers riding upon milk-

white mice, which leapt and curvetted like wee war horses. And the soldiers' helmets and breastplates were of beech husks, and their long brown boots were of mushroom skins, and their cloaks of purple orchid petals. Their spears were of fine dry grass, and their spurs of nettle stings.

Then came the ladies and gentlemen of the court, in the white and green of the wild wood sorrel. They had long, transparent wings of many colours, such as some water beetles wear, and they were very, very beautiful—so fine and delicate, it seemed as if a breath would blow them away.

Then came a coach of the precious silvery shell of the water snail, and six white mice drew it, and in it sat the King and Queen of the fairies, and their daughter and the bridegroom, all clad in silver, with spider lace and diamond dew drops and woven moonbeams.

Then came the animals, the mice, and the moles, with their velvet coats, and the squirrels in their russet fur, and the newts with their shiny orange waistcoats, and the stouts and the weasels and the rabbits—all quite good friends because it was the wedding day of the fairy Princess.

Then there was a soft, sweeping sound, as though someone passed with a trailing gown of velvet, and that was the birds and the sound of their wings; the black-birds and the thrush and the missel thrush. The wren,

the tit, the robin, the chaffinch, the goldfinch, the jay—all very beautifully dressed, and bright-eyed and eager.

All this time the trees had been swaying tip-toe from side to side, all eager to be gone, and now they were off.

“Don’t push against me, Mr. Holly!” cried the larch.

“Don’t tread on my toes, oh mighty Mr. Oak!” begged the cherry.

“Make haste, make haste!” entreated the Bryony, and leapt from tree to tree in its hurry.

The velvet mantle of the pine brushed Sylva’s face as it passed. The white stockings of the birch tree twinkled past. He saw the chestnut all in its spring glory of white and pink, and the larch in its pale green and rose colour, and the oak in its bronze. The cherry tree passed, all white, and with the sweetest breath; and the sycamore and the lime and the wild pear and the beech, and every other tree of the forest. And the bracken rose up, too, and ran to follow; so that there was nothing left but the bare ground, except an old toad who didn’t like anything or anybody. Sylva was not there, you may be sure, for he had caught at the pine tree’s velvet mantle as it passed; and danced along with the rest till they came to the meadow where the ball was to be held.

“Will you dance with me, dear Woodlander?” said Bryony, holding out its long, beckoning fingers to Sylva.

And then all the fairies began to dance, the trees and

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the animals and the birds, and Sylva with the Bryony. Every now and then they stopped and the animals nibbled at nuts and roots and drank water out of golden king-cups, while the fairies sipped their honey dew. Only the trees neither ate nor drank; but even when the music ceased, swayed backwards and forwards, longing through all their boughs for the music to begin again.

As the night went on the dance seemed to grow quicker and wilder, and the sound of the silver pipes more shrill and sweet.

Suddenly the little fairy Princess dropped her bridegroom's hand and ran to Sylva.

"Come!" she said; "dance with me, Woodlander."

And whether she grew as tall as Sylva or he grew as small as she, he could never tell; but as he caught her hands in both of his they seemed just the same height and they began to dance.

Then all the birds broke into song, so that the notes of the pipers were scarcely to be heard; the blackbird and the thrush and the linnet and the nightingale.

Quicker and quicker and quicker the streams of music poured forth; quicker and quicker and quicker.

Faster and faster flew the dancers. Sylva felt as if his feet had ceased to touch the earth at all.

Faster and faster they flew.

The moon seemed to break and drop from the sky in

a hundred hundred moonbeams, which danced as they danced.

The earth was not still for a moment. It flew as they flew—round and round and round.

And the trees and the fairies and the flowers—all the boughs of the trees sweeping like wings.

And all the notes of the birds and of the silver pipes seemed to be alive, and dancing, too, on flying silver-shod feet.

Faster and faster and faster. Sylva's woodland heart—the heart of the wee wild mouse beat like mad.

For a moment he touched the earth again, then his feet flew away for good. He and the Fairy Princess and the moon and the stars were dancing so fast that their feet seemed not to move at all. So fast that the air held them and they did not need to touch the earth.

Faster and faster and faster. The veil of cobweb lace which hung from the fairy's crown blew across his face and covered his eyes.

Faster and faster and faster. He could not loose his hands to push it away.

Faster and faster and faster. Tighter and tighter and tighter drew the Fairy's veil. Sweet scented and soft and light as down; like a veil of sleep.

The earth gave itself a quiet hump and shook off its worries. Sylva heard them go "plump" into the

moon, and cried aloud with joy. It seemed as if he were floating in a sea of delight.

The grey veil was sweet, though light no longer, but heavy, heavy as sleep.

When at last it lifted the dance had ceased, and Sylva swept the light grey mist of morning from his face; he rose to his feet and shook himself, for he was all damp with dew.

The moon and the stars were gone, and the fairies were gone. He was back in the wood again and all the trees were in their places, very still in the calm morning, seemingly asleep.

And the fairy Princess had gone, too. Only at Sylva's feet flowered one white-wood sorrelbloom; and you know that wherever the wood sorrel blossoms a fairy has stepped; not an ordinary fairy, but a Queen or a Princess of fairies. So you may be sure that he had not merely dreamed of that dance.

And the wild mouse heart? Ah, well, when the boy grew to a man, his man's heart was the biggest; and he had a wife and children whom he loved very, very much; so much that the little woodland heart grew sad and lonely and pined away and died.

The day that the woodland heart died, Sylva, who was a big, big man by then, said:

"I am tired of these stupid woods and fields; let us go and live in a town."

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And they actually did so. In a town! A smoky, crowded town, where fairies are never foolish enough to go, for they stay ever in the woodlands and dance because they are happy, and are happy because they dance, and so are always young. But Sylva's children stayed in the town and learned typewriting and went into shops and were very sensible and dull and dreary.

You ask me why they didn't shake the baby when the mouse ran down its red lane? Of course they did shake it. I did not put it in my story because I thought you would know that would be the very first thing its father and mother would do, and it's no use writing things that everyone knows. I like writing things that no one ever heard before, like this story.



UPSIDEDOWNLAND



The ham and the leg of mutton hurled themselves at her



THERE was once a little girl who was always wishing that everything was different to what it was. In the summer she wished it was winter; in the winter she wished it was summer; she wished her china dolls were wax, and her wax dolls china; she wished her birthday was Christmas, and Christmas was her birthday. She wished she lived in Timbuctoo and she wished she could walk on the ceiling like the flies. "If only everything was different," she used to say. "If only I was a boy; if only the jam was plum and not peach; if only my nose turned down and not up—what a good child I might be."

"If everything was only just opposite to what it was," she sighed one day, as she stood in front of the looking glass and tried to tie the blue ribbon over her left ear; "If only——" Then she stopped, for the ribbon was a little longer at one side than the other. She pulled the left end—it was surely the left end—

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but no, when she looked in the glass the right end was longer than ever, and there was hardly any of the left end to be seen.

Then she pulled the left end—yes, that was it, certainly, and yet, looking in the glass again, she could have been sure it was the right end.

She touched her left cheek with her fingers, and looked at the reflection again. Well, it was really very puzzling, but the little girl there was certainly touching her right cheek, and her bow was over the right ear. And—and, her nose turned down.

Jane gave a shriek of delight. At last things were really beginning to change. She leant forward and pressed so closely that her little pug nose touched the nose in the glass.

Still closer and the hard surface seemed to melt away in a kind of mist. Still closer—why, there was nothing to be close to, there was no looking glass at all and she was in the oddest room you have ever seen.

Her head felt quite funny and dizzy, and how oddly her hair was behaving. Standing straight up upon her head—no, hanging straight down—no, not straight down, straight *away* from it. And all the frills on her petticoats were flying backwards, and her feet. Now what do you think happened her? She tried to look at her feet. She looked down and there was nothing but her flying hair. Then she looked up—and *there*

were her feet; she put her hands down to her sides to smooth her skirt—no, up to her sides, and she stretched up to tie her shoe lace, and down to straighten her hair. For her wish had come true and she was walking on the ceiling, upside down, just like a fly; only the furniture and the carpet and everything else in the room was upside down, too.

Well, she was not in the least pleased, but sat down—no, up—and began to cry. And the tears ran up her face in showers, and made all her hair wet, and it was so very uncomfortable that she stopped crying, and got down from her chair and began to walk about.

There was a large open window at one side of the room exactly like there was in her own house, and she stepped out of it into the garden. “That must be the same,” she thought. “The sky cannot possibly be underneath.” But it was! And all the creepers were creeping down, and there was no shade because all the trees grew down, and oh, it was such a funny garden!

There were rows of gardeners planted there and the flowers were watering them with watering cans, while the hoes and the rakes were hoeing and raking all round them; and some of the gardeners were tied up to sticks, and some were pegged down to the ground.

Jane looked at them doubtfully at first. “They must be mad,” she thought. But they did not look at all mad; on the contrary, very quiet and comfortable, and

smiling so placidly. She managed to dodge the watering pots and hoes, and went up to speak to one, who had a very round, red face, and was tied up to a stake with a flower pot on the top of him to entice the earwigs away from him.

"Can you tell me what this place is, please?" asked Jane very politely. She was not generally at all a polite little girl but somehow the "please" seemed to come quite naturally, and rather surprised herself, but everything seemed just opposite to what it had been before. But the gardener did not answer, only wrinkled up his red face in a funny way that made every fold look like the petal of a hollyhock; and after all it was a hoe—who bustled up at that moment to loosen the ground round his feet—who answered her question.

"This is UPSIDEDOWNLAND, Enaj."

"That's not my name, please," said Jane, feeling very indignant, but still surprisingly polite.

"That's what it is here," said the hoe. "Keep out of my way, please, and be careful that worm there does not fall up your skirt."

Jane gave a little squeal of dismay, jumped on one side, just in time to avoid a large pink earth worm who went tumbling down to the sky; but the hoe took no notice and only enquired placidly how old she was.

"I am ten and two months," answered Jane.

"One nought on earth; nought one here, nought

before one does not count, so you are one and two months, Enaj."

"But I was ten last June."

"Ten last June in your world, one next June here, then you are not one yet, Enaj—aged two months," repeated the hoe, and taking a little note book out of its pocket it made a careful entry.

"What are you writing down?" asked Jane.

"We don't write down here; we add up," replied the hoe.

"Well, what are you adding up, please?"

"Your name and age," answered the hoe.

Jane felt very puzzled. There seemed to be no reason for it, and she was just about to put some further question when she suddenly heard a bell ringing loudly with a terrific clang and clamour.

"You'd better go," said the hoe, shaking down an immense caterpillar from the rose bush, which fell with a thud on the sky.

"Go where—why?" asked Jane.

"Why, to school," he replied, and turning, Jane saw an odd little black and white building into which numbers of children were flocking.

"Anyhow," she thought, "they may be more interesting than this old hoe," so she ran over to the school and entered it just behind the last pupil.

It was the funniest school you ever saw. The part

where the children generally sit was very small and the part where the teachers sit very large. And the children were at the teachers' desks and the teachers at the children's; and each child held a cane in its hand, which it banged on its desk as Jane joined them.

"Here's another teacher!" they shrieked. "New teacher, you can take class five!"

Class five consisted of one very thin lady, with a face like a white mouse, and she was being taught by some thirty children.

"We will begin with arithmetic!" cried one.

"No, parsing!"

"No, spelling!"

"No, geography!"

The poor pupil opened her mouth to speak, but Jane could not hear if she said anything, for there was too much noise going on all round.

At last the biggest child, by shouting the loudest and hitting the others over their legs with her cane, produced something like silence, and began to question the trembling white-mousey lady.

"How far is it from here to nowhere?"

"How many pennies make two?"

"How far is the moon from the earth?"

"How long would it take for a frog to swim from here to Timbuctoo?"

But the mousey lady seemed too frightened to answer and only twitched her mouth nervously.

"Such obstinacy!" cried the child who was questioning her. "Four strokes with the cane for refusing to speak!"

"I'll give it!"

"No, I!"

"No, I! I!" yelled all the children at once, and fell on her and beat her, till someone cried out, "There's a butterfly!" Upon which they all rushed and seized their hats to catch it, and raced round the school, tumbling over each other; and finally, as it sailed out of the door, threw themselves out after it, leaving the mousey lady sitting on the floor, and all the other teacher-pupils more or less battered to bits.

Jane went and helped them up, and seated them in a row on a form; then she got some water and washed their poor faces as well as she could, for of course they were still all upside down and the water ran into their hair.

"You're a very polite little girl," said one.

"I'm afraid I was not when I was at home," said Jane, so truthfully that she felt surprised at herself.

"That accounts for it; for this is Upsidedownland, you know, and if you had been good at home, you would have been naughty here. All those others were model children, and had prizes for Scripture and good be-

haviour and deportment and obedience; and look what they are now."

"Awful!" sighed all the other teachers.

"Just listen to them!"

Jane did not need to be told to listen, for she could not have possibly helped hearing, the din was something terrific.

There was bellowing.

Shrieking.

Yelling.

Roaring.

Whistling.

Laughing.

Crying.

Vociferating.

Clamouring.

Tramping.

Bumping.

Banging.

Stamping.

And with it all the clanging of a great bell.

"It's dinner time; you had better go," said one of the teachers.

"Aren't you coming, too?" asked Jane.

"Not now, we feel too knocked up."

"And pulled down."

"And out of sorts."

And they all sighed together, and leant against each other for support; till the end one tumbled down, and they fell like nine pins, and lay along the bench, gasping, sobbing, and sighing.

Jane hesitated; it seemed cruel to leave them so, but really there was nothing to be done and she was very hungry; so after a moment she crept out of the door and followed the other children to another building, somewhat like the school, from whence came the sound of the bell.

They had all tumbled in hugger-mugger, without stopping to wash their hands or even smooth their hair, and scrambled to the places, set all the way down a long table, which was literally laden with food.

Jane was very hungry indeed, and as everyone seemed to be throwing themselves on the food she did not wait to be asked, but took up her knife and fork to cut a delicious looking meat pie that was just in front of her.

Imagine her astonishment, when the moment the fork touched it, the pie leapt up and literally hurled itself upon her.

It was a good job indeed that she was armed with both knife and fork, for the pie flew at her again and again and seemed as if each moment it would devour her. And indeed it might have done so, for Jane was getting quite exhausted, when suddenly the dish caught

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on the edge of the table and broke, and meat and pastry were scattered right and left.

Jane glanced round. The noise was terrible; plates were smashing in every direction, and all the food was in revolt. Meat and vegetables, puddings and cakes, all in a mad revolt.

Jane had not time to look about her, for a great ham was attacking her on one side and a leg of mutton on the other. She was almost in despair. Never in the world had anything looked so hungry as that ham and leg of mutton did.

“Oh dear, oh dear,” she thought, tears which she had not time to wipe away streaming down her hot cheeks; “as it’s Upsidedownland I suppose the dinner is going to eat us. Oh dear, oh dear!”

The noise had grown less. Suddenly it seemed as if there were very much fewer children than there had been before. Jane only had time for a momentary glance round; then—terrified by what she saw—she turned on her two opponents with such vigour that they fell on one side and stood consulting together. Jane was a round, plump little girl, and they did not feel inclined to give her up so easily.

It was then she found that it had become quite, quite quiet.

Where had all the children gone?

Jane began to shiver and shake with fear.

The floor was covered with broken plates, but all the food was on the table again.

Did it—did it? Yes, it certainly did look *fatter*, all the joints and the jellies and the junkets—why they were twice the size they had been before!

It was Upsidedownland, and the *food* had eaten the *children*.

At this moment the ham and the leg of mutton recovered and hurled themselves at her. Jane gave a shriek, threw over her chair, and turned to run, but caught her foot and went headlong on the floor instead, just as she caught sight of an immense jam puff that leapt from the table to run and head off her flight.

Then it seemed as if everything had thrown itself upon her at once, so that she was buried in an avalanche of meat and pies and pastries. Oh! oh! she was being buried alive; oh! oh! oh! Was there no escape?

One last desperate struggle—one last desperate shriek—and then——

She was sitting on the floor in the night nursery and her Mother was leaning over her.

“That’s all right, dear, it’s all right. You’ve had a nasty, wicked dream; that’s all.”

“But the ham!” gasped Jane, clinging desperately to her Mother. “And the mutton. Oh! Oh!”

“Missus, I think Miss Jane had better have a little

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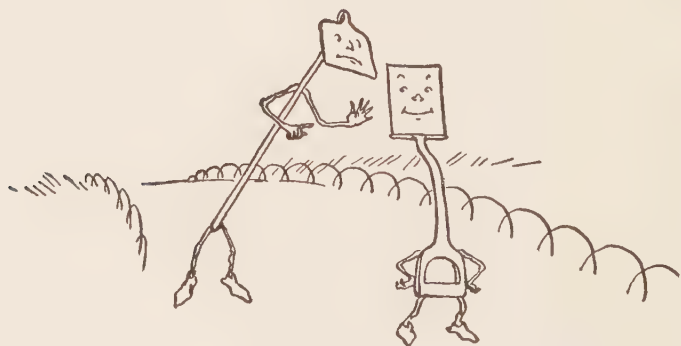
Dose. She must have eaten something that disagreed with her. *C-a-s-t-o-r o-i-l*, eh?" said Nurse.

They both thought Jane did not understand when they spelt it like that. However she took the *Dose* quite quietly, and even forgot to bite a piece out of the glass. Then she let them put her to bed, and darken the room. There was only one thing she would not do, and that was to leave hold of her Mother's hand. If that horrible Upsidedownland was what they called a dream, she would not venture there alone a second time, anyhow.

But Jane was changed.

She did not love looking in the glass as she used to do. She did not grumble and growl at her food and wish it was something else.

She liked her nose to be turned up. But whenever she looked at the flies on the ceiling she shivered and shook.



LITTLE KING MIGUEL



So the little king climbed on the brown bear's back



ONCE there was a very beautiful woman,
so beautiful that all the winds fell in
love with her.

Now the North Wind is an old man
very fierce and wild and rough, with a
long grey beard, and a breath that freezes whatever it
touches.

And the East Wind is dark and swarthy with a
flowing black beard and his breath bears the scent of
strong spices, nutmegs, cloves and cinnamon, and his
robes are crimson and gold; he is very beautiful but he
is not good.

And the South Wind is slim and sleepy and smooth-
cheeked, and his robes are of purple and his eyes black
like velvet; he is just a little better than the North Wind
or the East Wind, though he would not even take the
trouble to be really good or great. But the West Wind,
ah, the West Wind is lovely and to be loved. His eyes
are grey, his breath is like the scent of clover, he

is quick as the swallow on the wing, and where he touches the boughs of the trees they all leap into bloom. If one day you see the hawthorn hedge and cherry tree, the pear and the plum trees all bare boughs and the next day all blossom, you need not wonder, but just be sure that the West Wind passed that way in the night.

Well, all these four winds fell in love with this one beautiful woman. And the North Wind said, "I am strongest, I can seize her when I will." But she did not like the cold, and she would not go out of doors when he called to her with his rough voice down the chimney and through the key holes but kept snugly within her palace walls.

Neither did she like the great heat, and she said the voice of the East Wind made her head ache, so she would not go out when he was blowing either; and though he boasted that she loved him best for his riches and his splendour, still he could only see her through the palace windows, and not often even then, for she liked to keep her silk curtains drawn when he was calling to her in his harsh voice. And the South Wind, she said, made her tired so she only cared to lie on her couch and dream when he was abroad, but the West Wind she loved.

Whenever the West Wind came it touched her heart strings, for we all have strings to our hearts like a harp, and those we love play music upon them. If you lay

your head against your mother's breast when you have been very good and she loves you very much you will hear the sweetest little tunes in all the world being played there, all for you.

Generally the most beautiful woman in all the world thought of no one except her little son with whom she romped and sang all day, and for whom her heart played its darlingest music.

Only when the West Wind came she would forget him a little, and would run out into the garden and stretch out her arms, and her cheeks would glow pink like the bare boughs of the almond tree with its blooming, and she would kiss the flower that the wind had touched, and sing with the birds for very happiness.

Then at last one day, when she ran out thus to meet him, the West Wind gathered up all his strength and lifted her up and carried her away with him. She was wearing a white robe, but as he held her it grew pink as the almond blossoms; and trailed out behind her across the sky like a lovely cloud, so that all the people on that side of the world called to one another to look.

Then Miguel, her son, sat down in the garden and wept.

Now Miguel's father was dead, and though he was only a teeny, tiny boy, just five years old, he was a King, and had everything he wanted but a Father. That did

not matter very much when he had his Mother to love him so, but now she was gone he cried and cried and could not be comforted. He told all his heralds and ambassadors to go forth and offer a great reward to anyone who could bring back his Mother, gold and diamonds and the half of his kingdom, and even his dear wooden horse Jehoshaphat, and "If it is a woman who finds her for me I will marry her myself," he said, for he knew what it was to be a King, though he was only five. Then he sent all his armies out to fight for her, but they could find no one to fight, and came back without having fired a shot.

"Oh if only I was a man!" cried the little King, clenching his fat hands and stamping his foot, "and if only you were not all fools and cowards she would be here," he added, which was not fair, for they had all done their best, but still he stamped and raged till evening came.

Each night he cried, and cried and cried, for he was just a little boy, though he was a King.

He did not even want to sit up late, now there seemed no one to play with, though all his courtiers and ladies and gentlemen tried their hardest to amuse him. Even the Lord Chancellor crawled about on all fours pretending to be a bear, and growled awfully, but it did not seem a bit funny now, and the Commander in Chief would have played soldiers with him, but it was

not worth while somehow. All little King Miguel wanted was to go to bed, where he need not even try to behave like a King at all, but could hug Jehoshaphat and cry.

He could bear it all through the day. But when evening came and there was no Mother to kiss him and cuddle him and hear him say his prayers it seemed quite unendurable. His Aunts and Cousins used to kiss him, but only little pecky kisses; they would never have thought of kissing all his little pink toes in turn like his Mother, and even they called him "Your Highness" and not "Duckums" and "Micky" as she did.

It was all dreadful!

At last King Miguel made up his mind that his Mother must be found, and that, as all the ships that he had sent off round the world to seek her had come back as good as empty, he would go himself.

"Put my boots by my bed to-night," he said to his chief maid in waiting, that very evening as he was getting undressed.

"Why, your Majesty?" asked the nurse.

"You must not say 'Why' to a King," answered Miguel; "do as you are told, put my crown there too and my dressing gown, and a clean pocket-handkerchief and give me Jehoshaphat."

The nurse did as she was told, but she wished the King's Mother was back again to say, "What nonsense,

Duckums!" she did not dare to say it, of course, but she felt uneasy and wondered what strange ideas were at work within that little head. However, she made up her mind that she would stay awake all night so that she could hear if Miguel moved. She did not sleep in his room, for he would have no one there but his Mother, but in the next room, with the door open between the two.

It was a hot, heavy night though, and for all her good resolutions, after a time the maid fell asleep. Miguel could hear her heavy breathing, and also the snoring of the sentry who lay outside his door.

"Hush, Jehoshaphat," whispered the King. The spotted wooden horse seemed so real to him he was always expecting it to neigh.

Then he slipped out of bed very quietly and put on his boots; he did not trouble about socks, and he only put the laces through the top holes and tied them there, for he was in a hurry. Then he put on his dressing gown, and his crown so that every one should know he was a King. And he took his pocket-handkerchief for luggage, and lifted up Jehoshaphat tenderly in his arms, for though he was wood he had his feelings like anyone else.

Then Miguel crept over the bed on which a soldier slept, out of the door, and down the wide stairs.

It was all very still and lonely and sort of creepy. The great clock at the foot of the stairs was the only thing that seemed awake.

"Where are you going, King Miguel?" it ticked.

"To seek for my Mother," answered the child, then stopped. "Do you happen to know where I can find her or which way I should go?"

"Up the hill and down the hill," answered the clock, "and across the sea where the rainbow ends. I would go with you, only to-morrow is my day for getting wound up and I might miss it. I would not trouble to go if I were you either."

"You're a selfish thing," said the King, for he was very indignant, "I'll have your hands cut off when I come home again." And he pushed back the bolt of the great door, which was well oiled, as everything ought to be in a Palace, and crept out upon the Terrace and down the steps to the garden.

"Where are you going, dear King Miguel?" asked the roses, and when he told them they cried.

"Oh Miguel, dear Miguel, we wish we could come too; if only we had feet. But you must go up the hill and down the hill and across the sea where the rainbow ends and there you will find her. And tell her we love her, and she must get back before the autumn comes—for then we die."

And the Lilies and Larkspurs and Stocks said the

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same. And the little King thought, "Things that God has made are ever so much nicer than the things that man has made—such as that silly old clock."

And, do you know, some of the flowers almost pulled their roots from the ground, they longed to follow him so, most particularly the Heartseases and the Love-in-a-Mist; and they wept such tears that all the gardeners were astonished next morning, at what they thought was the heaviest dew that there had ever been in all the world.

Only the Passion flower tore itself from the trellis work against which it grew and went with him, leaping from tree to tree, catching at each one with its slender fingers, then leaping on to the next, and through the wall of the Palace Garden and into the forest, where it awaited the King, who had some difficulty in unbarring the heavy gate.

So King Miguel, with Jehoshaphat pressed to his beating heart and the Passion flower leaping on before him, passed into the forest which lay beyond the wall.

The King in his dressing gown and crown, and his boots all tied awry.

Presently along the path came lumbering a great Brown Bear.

"Do not hurt Jehoshaphat," said Miguel who was trembling a little, though being a King he was too

proud to seem afraid for himself. "He is only really a wooden horse, and would be very dry to eat."

"I will hurt no one, little King Miguel," answered the bear gently. "Tell me where you are going and perhaps I can help you."

"I am going to seek the Queen, my Mother," answered Miguel proudly. Then he gave a little sob. "Oh do tell me where she is, good Bear; I am so tired of being just a King, I do want to be cuddled back into a little boy again. For it's no good, you know, being a Duke or a Prince or even a King, and having everything else in the world if you have not got a Mother to make you feel cuddly and nice; and there's no one else who will ever kiss your little pink toes in all the world."

"You must go up the hill and down the hill and across the sea where the rainbow ends," replied the Brown Bear, "and you will surely find her. I myself will come with you; and you may ride on my back."

So the little King climbed on to the Brown Bear's back, and sat upright for a while; then his head drooped lower and lower and lay on the shaggy neck, for little King Miguel was asleep with his crown all awry.

When the King awoke it was morning, and the birds were singing among the trees and the Passion flower, who leapt in front of them from bough to bough, was wet with dew.

"I am so hungry," said King Miguel.

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And the Bear stopped beside a hollow tree, and put in his great hand and brought out honey for the boy to eat.

Then said King Miguel, "I am so thirsty, good Bear;" and the Bear was troubled, for he did not know where water was to be found. But the Passion flower leapt to the top of a high tree and, spying a pool at a distance, told them where to turn that they might find it; and leapt on in front to show them the way, so that very soon they came to the water which lay dark and cool, all shadowed by the trees around it.

Miguel with a cry of joy flung himself from the Bear's back to drink. But, alas! the banks were high and steep and with all the endeavour possible the water could not be reached.

Then Miguel forgot that he was a King and sat down and cried, and tears ran down the Bear's rough face too—for grief at the little King's grief.

And the pool of water heard them and began to tremble with sorrow that it could not give them drink, and it called to them.

"Where are you going, King Miguel?"

"I am going to seek the Queen, my Mother," said the King. "Can you tell me the way?"

"Up the hill and down the hill, and over the sea where the rainbow ends," answered the pool.

But Miguel did not move, only sat and wept.

"What is it that grieves you, King Miguel?" asked the pool, though he knew quite well.

"I am so, so, so thirsty, I can go no further," cried the little wee boy King.

And at that the heart of the pool swelled so that it was near to burst and with the swelling of its heart the water rose and rose, till it trembled high on the brink—

"Drink, oh my King!" it cried.

And Miguel drank, and the bear drank and the Passion flower dipped itself in the water and shook the drops over all its leaves.

Then King Miguel dipped Jehoshaphat's nose into it too. He had drunk so much in his day that all the black paint was quite washed off almost up to his eyes, for of course the King never forgot him, and would have him taste of all that was set before him.

"Thank you, good pool," said the King, "I will tell my Mother when I see her how kind you have been to me, then when I get back to my kingdom I will make you Prince of all my pools." And he passed on.

Then the pool's heart gave one great leap and the water passed right over the bank and ran to follow the King.

All that night the woodland had been rising up hill, but now it began to dip, and the water of the pool began to run.

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"Forgive me, dear King," it said, "but I cannot stop myself," and it ran round the Bear's legs almost touching Miguel's little dangling feet, and down the hill in front of them.

And it ran and it ran.

And it grew wider and wider as it ran.

And wider and wider till it reached the valley.

And in the valley it widened out.

And widened out.

And widened out.

Till it spread like a sea.

Now over the other side of the valley dwelt the West Wind with the Mother of little King Miguel.

And the most beautiful woman in the world was not happy because she was away from her little son. And the West Wind was not happy either, for he loved her, and it grieved him to see her grieve so, indeed he would have gone himself to fetch Miguel but he dared not leave the beautiful woman for fear that the other winds, who were always watching jealously, would come and seize her while he was away.

Now the morning that the pool with the big heart grew into a sea, the beautiful woman went out onto the Terrace of the Palace which the wind had built her, and saw the water dancing and leaping in the sunshine. Then she called to the West Wind to come and see this strange sight, of a sea where none was before.

And as they stood and watched the King's Mother cried out, "My heart, my heart."

The West Wind was afraid at her cry and asked her what it was; then between laughter and tears she told him that the little tune had stirred in her heart once more, and that she was sure that her little son was near.

"Perhaps there just beyond the water," she cried, "my little wee boy is seeking for me."

And the West Wind called together all the sweet singing and swift birds who loved him, and told them to fly over the water and see what was on the further side.

And they went, and returned, and told him that on the further side was Miguel, with his wooden horse in his arms, riding on the back of a big Brown Bear, while a Passion flower hung for shade above them.

"What does he look like, my dear wee boy," asked the Queen. And the birds told her how he wore his dressing gown and how his crown had slipped on one side—his head drooped so wearily—and his boots were all laced awry, but his eyes were brave and he held his wooden horse close to his heart.

And the Queen laughed and cried all in a breath.

Then the West Wind called all the flowers together, red and blue, and pink and violet and yellow and white,

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and bade them make an arch over the water like a rainbow.

And the Honeysuckle leapt over first, then the Briar Roses, and the Clematis. Then Lad's Love ran on in front and they all followed.

The pink of the rainbow was of Roses, and Stocks, Sweet Williams, Sweet Peas, and Phlox.

The red was all of Roses and Poppies and Pimpernels, and Scarlet Runners which leapt on in front of them all.

And the yellow was of Daffodils and Primroses.

And the blue was of Harebells and Bluebells and Birds-eye, and Cornflowers, and Larkspurs.

And the purple was of Lady's Smocks and Meadow Orchids and Pansies and Violets and Willow Strife.

And many more there were, more than I can tell; so that the rainbow bridge grew wide and strong.

Then the Passion Flower leapt over first.

"I would not trust that Clematis, my strength is needed," I am sure," it said, which was not fair, but the Passion Flower and the Clematis were always jealous of each other.

"You had better go without me," said the Brown Bear, "for I am a heavy old lump of a fellow."

"I will not," stormed the King; "if it breaks with you it may break with me. Go on."

So they all passed over the rainbow bridge, while the water beneath them danced with joy.

As they neared the far side, the Queen stretched out both her arms wide, and the King leapt from the Brown Bear's back and ran and ran and ran and was caught to her singing heart.

"My darling wee boy, my duckums boy," she said, and hugged him, and hugged him. Then she placed him on the West Wind's knee, and knelt down, and took off his dusty little boots and kissed all his tiny pink toes.

She never *could* remember he was a King, you know.



THE FAIRY RABBIT WITH THE
FAIRY WHISKERS



Peter picked up the rabbit and put it in his basket

THE AIRY ABBIT WITH THE AIRY W HISKERS



T was Peter's birthday and he was six years old, a most splendid age to be indeed! And a splendid quantity of presents he had too, or rather he thought them splendid.

Peter's Father and Mother were always poor in spite of being always at work; they had no time to play with their little boy and no money to buy him presents with either. But Peter was the very Prince of Contentment. When his poor little cold toes came peeping out of the ends of his boots, he laughed at them, and pretended they were a little family of children looking out of doors to see what the weather was like. "Pop-out," and "Peep-out," and "Red-nose," and "Pert-Face," he used to call them, and many other comical names.

When Peter's little tummy was very empty, he used to pull his leather belt very tight round it, so that it did not feel quite so bad, and laugh and say that he had "Strap Soup" for supper.

As I said before, he thought his birthday presents

splendid beyond words. His Father had given him a little boat with a mast, and sails of rag. The hen had laid him an egg; and his Mother had made him a little cake with the figure "6" in currants on the top. A Prince could not have wished for a better birthday, thought Peter.

"I don't think I'll do any work to-day, Father, if you don't mind," he said, after he had finished the nice fresh egg which he had for his breakfast; "One keeps six for a long time you know, and I will have plenty of time to work all the rest of the year; to-day I will see the world."

His parents smiled, but they were only too glad he should have any pleasure, so his Mother wrapped the cake up in a piece of paper for him, filled a little bottle with fresh spring water, put them both in a basket, and off he started to see the world; while his Father and Mother went to their work in the fields.

Peter had not got very far along the high road when a Rabbit came running at the most tremendous rate out of a little wood near by.

"Little boy, little boy," cried the Rabbit; "save me and hide me or I shall be killed, a great immense man is after me."

Peter picked up the Rabbit, put it in his basket, and covered it with the piece of paper which the cake had

been folded in. He was just in time for a great man came running out of the wood.

"Little boy, little boy, have you seen a Rabbit?" he cried.

"What's that?" asked Peter.

"A Rabbit—a Rabbit; a little brown thing with brown fur and a white tail. Don't you know a Rabbit?"

"Is it a bird?" asked Peter.

"No, no, a Rabbit!" answered the man, fairly dancing with impatience.

"What's a Rabbit?" enquired Peter again. "Is it a fish?"

"No, no,—oh you're a poor silly, there's no use in bothering with such as you," cried the man angrily.

"But——" said Peter.

"Tut, tut!" cried the man and rushed off in a rage.

When he had gone Peter called, "Come out, little Rabbit," and out hopped Bunny. Then they both laughed fit to burst themselves.

The Rabbit pulled out one of his little side whiskers and gave it to Peter.

"Keep that," said he; "and as long as you have it you will be able to smell anything anywhere that you may wish. You can smell what the Sultan of Turkey has for dinner if you want to."

Peter took the whisker and hid it in the lining of his cap, and off skipped the Rabbit. He had scarcely

gone when back came tearing the man with a very white frightened face.

"Hide me, hide me!" he cried. "The King's huntsman is after me for hunting the fairy Rabbit with the fairy whiskers. Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear, what shall I do. Oh dear, oh dear."

Peter could hear the thunder of horses' feet quite near by; on the ground lay the large bough of a tree covered with leaves.

"Hide under there," he cried. And the man crept under. Then Peter seated himself tightly on the top and began to eat his cake and drink out of his little bottle of water. A splendid feast it seemed.

Next moment the chief Huntsman came in sight on his great chestnut horse. Very fine he was, too, with a green velvet coat and white breeches and a horn flung over his shoulder.

"Little boy, little boy," he cried, "have you seen a man hunting a Rabbit?"

"Well, a Rabbit, I know what that is," said Peter. "But a man, what is a man?"

"Tut, tut, are you a fool, child? A man! Why, I am a man!" And he struck his chest with a magnificent air.

"Please, Sir, no!" answered Peter. "I never saw anyone like you before."

"But this man was not like me, Child!" answered the Huntsman impatiently. "Just a common man."

"Had he two eyes, please, Sir?"

"Of course, of course!"

"And arms?"

"Yes, yes!"

"And eyes?"

"Yes, yes, and mouth and nose and all," replied the Huntsman, jumping up and down in his saddle with rage.

"And yet not like you! Was he like a fish?" asked Peter.

But the Huntsman was too disgusted to stand any more.

"You are nothing more than a fool!" he cried, and clapped spurs to his horse and galloped away.

Then Peter got up, and the man crept out from under the green boughs, and they laughed fit to burst themselves.

Before they parted the man took out a battered-looking old watch and gave it to Peter.

"Take this," said he, "and whatever time you set it to, that time will it be. You will only just have to tell it whether you would prefer it to be night or day, and even the sun and moon will obey it, and all the clocks in the country will be the same."

Peter took the watch with many thanks and put it into his pocket, and off ran the man.

He had not been gone above a moment when back came clattering the Huntsman.

"Hide me, little boy, hide me," he cried. "The King's after me to kill me for letting the man escape who was hunting the fairy Rabbit with the fairy whiskers."

"Jump off your horse and hide under that green bough," said Peter.

The Huntsman was too frightened not to obey. When he was safely under the green bough Peter mounted his horse, then pushed it back a little so that it stood with all four legs straddled over the bough and the man.

Next moment the King came in sight, galloping very fast. His crown was rather aslant and his red mantle was flying out behind him.

"Have you seen a Huntsman on a horse?" cried the King.

"Indeed I know a horse when I see it," answered Peter. "You're riding one, so am I. But a Huntsman, what is that? Is it a beast or a bird or a fish?"

The King had no patience at all, perhaps because he was a King.

"You're a poor, simple fool," said he, and rode off home without wasting more words.

Then the Huntsman crept out, and they both laughed fit to burst themselves, and he, too, mounted his horse and rode away; but before he went he took his horn from his shoulder and gave it to Peter.

"Keep it," said he, "and when you blow it twenty mounted huntsmen will appear and twenty times twenty hounds. They have never been much use to me, but they may be to you." So saying he rode away.

Peter took off his cap, picked out the whisker and sniffed at it.

"I wonder what they are having for dinner at the Palace to-day?" he said to himself.

No sooner had he spoken than he smelt the most beautiful smell that he had ever smelt in all his life before; all turkeyish and plum-puddingish and hot coffeeish and strawberryish.

It was so good, that smell, that he had to follow it; and he ran and he ran and he ran, till he came to the kitchen door, at the back of the King's Palace.

Then he took out his watch and looked at it. A quarter to ten, it marked.

"That's too early," said Peter, and he pushed the battered old hands round till they were at one o'clock. There was a terrible bustle in the kitchen then, I can tell you. The cook was nearly in a fit, for dinner was to be at one sharp, and there he was with the turkeys not even stuffed or the stalks off the strawberries,

which were to be made into jelly, or the plum pudding finished being stirred or the coffee ground. Indeed there was nothing of the dinner at all except the smell of what it would be, and Peter had all that.

That cook made them all bustle round, as you may guess. And seeing little Peter standing in the door, he made him come in and help too. So that he chopped sage for stuffing and stalked strawberries and heaped wood on the fire and stirred pudding and ground coffee and had his ears boxed, the same as any of the other cook-boys.

A nice rage the King was in. He was just home from his ride and they could hear him stamping about up above. Every moment a courtier would come running to the top of the kitchen stairs to ask if dinner was not ready. Not that the King was hungry, he was far too much of a King and had far too much food for that. But he thought it was time for his dinner, and his dinner he would have. But even with twenty cook-boys blowing up the fire with twenty pairs of bellows it could not be done before it could be done. How could it?

At last the dinner was more or less ready. Then the cook and the cook-boys dished it up, with the butlers and the footmen dancing round them in a fury of impatience, and the courtiers calling from the top of the stairs:

"Hurry up, hurry up; oh, do hurry up! The King is in such a state as never was; oh, do hurry up!"

However, it was all off at last, or so the cook had thought; but just at the last moment—as the last footman had disappeared with the last dish and he was wiping down the kitchen tables—he found the bread sauce had been forgotten and was waiting there, all ready in its golden sauce bowl.

"Whatever am I to do now?" he exclaimed in terrible dismay. "The King won't eat turkey without bread sauce—no King would—and he will be in a worse state than ever if he's kept waiting. Deary, deary me! What am I to do?"

"I'll take it," said Peter.

The cook looked at him doubtfully for a moment. He was only a little tiny, wee fellow, in a blue smock, but he was far prettier and cleaner than any of the other boys.

"You must not go into the dining-hall; you must just stand at the door and say, 'Hist! hist!' very softly, so that one of the footmen may hear you and come and take the bowl," said the cook.

"All right," answered Peter, and off he ran. When he got to the door of the dining-hall, however, he quite forgot to say, "Hist! hist!" but ran right in and put down the sauce bowl in front of the King.

"Your bread sauce, Mr. King," said he. "And,

please, I'd like some turkey, with a nice little bit of stuffing and some coffee, for I'm very, very hungry."

The King looked on either side of him and then behind him and then down the table to see who spoke.

"Eh! What?" he shouted.

"My mother says it's rude to say 'what.'" For though Peter's parents were so poor they never stinted themselves in the matter of manners, which cost nothing.

Then the King looked down and saw Peter with his very big blue eyes and his little blue smock and his little toes peeping out of his little worn boots. And then because he was really a good-natured King when nothing annoyed him—which it is always easy for anyone to be—he burst out laughing and all the courtiers laughed, too.

"Bring a chair and put a footstool on top of it. My Lord Blue-eyes wishes to be seated," he ordered, still laughing.

So they brought a chair and put a hassock on it, and Peter scrambled up and had his dinner with the King—turkey and bread sauce and plum pudding and strawberry jelly and all—saying his grace and tucking his table napkin under his chin like any grown man (at home they used burdock leaves instead, but the manners were there, all the same), and quirking his little finger most elegantly too.

"If there's anything I could do for your Majesty," said Peter when dinner was over, standing between the King's knees, just as he did with his own father, and coughing a little because the smoke from the King's cigar got down his throat, and was so much stronger than the dried cabbage his father smoked.

The King and his courtiers all laughed at Peter's words. Then the King sighed and they all sighed.

"If only you could find the Fairy Rabbit with the Fairy Whiskers," said the King.

"Well, I'll do my best," answered Peter. So he bade good-bye to them all, and stood on tiptoe and kissed the King's chin, which was all he could reach, then trotted off "klimp clump" down the grand marble staircase in his little shabby nailed boots.

The sentry was nearly not letting him out of the door, but Peter drew himself up so straight and said with such a grand air, "I am on the King's business," that the man not only let him pass, but actually saluted, and went home to his wife and told her to cut the ends off her boots.

"Toes are in fashion," said he. "The greatest Captain I have ever seen came out of the King's Palace this morning with all of his showing. It's quite the thing, I am told."

Then Peter went to the same place in the wood

where he had seen the Rabbit before and called out, "Bunny, Bunny!" But no Bunny came.

"Bunny, dear! Dear, Fairy Whiskered Bunny!" But still no answer, and even Peter was beginning to feel that he would never laugh again, when it struck him that a crow over his head was cawing in a very odd manner.

"Find the wolf, find the wolf. Find the wolf," it seemed to say.

"Do you mean to tell me that the wolf has run off with the fairy Rabbit?" asked Peter.

And the crow winked, which means "Yes" in the fairy crow language, as anyone knows.

Then Peter put his horn to his lips and blew a long blast.

At once there came the tramp of horses' feet and the baying of hounds and out of the thicket dashed twenty Huntsmen on chestnut steeds, and twenty times twenty hounds, with smooth white coats dappled with brown and black, and the dearest brown eyes.

The chief Huntsman rode up to Peter and asked what he wished.

"Catch Mr. Grey Wolf for me," said he, "but do not let your hounds kill him. I wish to hear what he has done with the Fairy Rabbit with the Fairy Whiskers."

Off went the Huntsmen and the hounds. For a while Peter could hear them plunging about among the trees.

Then there was a silence, then a long, deep baying, which showed that they were on Mr. Wolf's track.

Soon back they all came, the foam dripping from the horses' bits and all the hounds with open mouths and hanging tongues, so great was the haste they had made, while across the chief Huntsman's saddle was slung Mr. Wolf, in a terrible fright, for all the hounds were gnashing their teeth to get at him.

"Tell me where the Fairy Rabbit with the Fairy Whiskers is," said Peter, "and you shall go free. Did you eat him?"

"No, please your Lordship," answered the wolf very humbly, "Mrs. Owl had caught a nice little Partridge for her dinner and I gave her Mr. Bunny in exchange for it."

"Is that true?" asked Peter.

"Upon my honour as a gentleman," answered the wolf. So Peter told the Huntsmen to untie him and keep the hounds back while he escaped.

Peter knew that owls only fly about at night time; during the day they lie snug in hollow trees or under overhanging roofs of barns, and are very difficult to find. So Peter whizzed round the battered old hands of the magic watch till they pointed to twelve o'clock.

"Twelve o'clock at night, please, Mr. Watch," said he, and immediately he heard all the clocks in the distant Palace striking twelve.

It grew suddenly dark. A man driving a calf came along the path, grumbling loudly at the sudden end of the day; and all the birds went fluttering and twittering off to their nests in a great fuss; while an old badger poked his head out of his hole, and the air began to feel damp and chilly.

"Have you your pistols with you?" asked Peter of the chief Huntsman.

"Yes, your Lordship," answered the man. "We each carry a pistol in our belt."

"Go through the wood," said Peter, "and shoot Mrs. Owl for me. She will be wandering about looking for her dinner now that night has come on. But be careful only to hit her in the wing, so as to catch her; for I must ask her where the Fairy Rabbit with the Fairy Whiskers has gone to."

The Huntsmen crashed off among the shrubs and trees once more. For a little there was no sound but the short "yap" of the hounds, who did not understand what they were searching for, and the thud of the horses' feet. Then there came the sound of shots; and the next moment back rode the Huntsmen, the leader holding poor Mrs. Owl—who had a broken wing and was struggling violently—in his hand.

"Don't be frightened, Mrs. Owl; tell me the truth and I will let you go," said Peter. "What have you done with the Fairy Rabbit with the Fairy Whiskers?"

"May it please you," replied the Owl, "Mr. Bunny is in the hollow of the tree where I live. It's my birth-night to-morrow and I was keeping him for a little party I meant to have."

"Is that true?" asked Peter.

"Upon my honour as a lady," replied Mrs. Owl. So Peter made her show him and the Huntsman where the hollow tree was. It was only a mere stump and Peter could peer down it by standing on tiptoe.

"Are you there, dear Bunnykins?" asked he, and then came a little squeak of delight from the bottom of the stump.

"Little Blue-eyes, little Blue-eyes, is that you? Pick me out, pick me out. I'm half dead with hunger."

Then the Huntsman put in his long arm and pulled out the Rabbit, and put the owl in its place.

"Thank you, Mrs. Owl," said Peter. "I am very much obliged to you for not having eaten my friend and I will bring you something nice to-morrow to make up for your loss."

Then Peter dismissed his Huntsmen and his hounds and picked up the Fairy Rabbit in his arms and the Fairy Rabbit rubbed its soft face against his and burred with delight as Peter trotted off with her to the Palace.

When they arrived there it was all dark. Everyone was in bed and there was no sound except snores. The

King's snores were louder than any others, because he was a king. It was no good knocking at the door because no one could possibly have heard them. So Peter twisted round the battered old hands of his battered old watch to eight o'clock in the morning.

And all the cocks began to crow.

And all the alarums in the Palace began to go off, "Wuz-zur-r-r-r!"

And all the footmen and the chambermaids and the cook-boys began to tumble out of bed, "ge-bang."

And the King began holloing for his morning tea.

Up the grand staircase clattered Peter, led by the sound, and into the King's bedroom, and plumped the Fairy Rabbit down on the crimson silk coverlet.

And the Rabbit burred.

"Duckums, darling!" exclaimed the King. Then pulled out one of the Rabbit's whiskers and sniffed hard. He wanted to know if the Princess whom he loved and who was away on the other side of the world at her Father's Court was singeing her hair while she curled it with the tongs—a de-plor-able thing to do, as if it went on she might singe it all away and the King did not want a bald Princess for his wife. He also wished to know what the King of Jericho was having for his breakfast that morning, and all sorts of other interesting things.

But Peter was hungry. "Please, Mr. King," he said,

very politely, "don't you think it is time for breakfast?"

Then the King remembered who it was that had brought back his dear Fairy Rabbit; and he called for his Lord Chamberlain and gave orders that Peter should have as much breakfast as ever he could eat, and everything he wanted forever after. Also that his parents should be sent for and given a home in the Palace Gardens, and his Father should be made chief of all the gardeners; and his Mother mistress of all the maids; and that Peter should be given the title of Lord Blue Eyes in real earnest; and allowed to do just whatever he liked forever more.

And that's the end of the story.

"Burring?" You want to know what "burring" is? Well, I should have thought you knew that. You did know that cats "purred" when they were happy, didn't you? Well, rabbits "burr." It's the same, only a little different.



THE BUBBLE WORLD



Still the Prince blew steadily on

THE BUBBLE WORLD



ONCE there lived a boy who was the son of a King. He had all that he could ever wish for in the way of toys, horses and waggons and guns and soldiers and engines and cricket bats and balls; but he was tired of them all. They were always the same; they did nothing by themselves; they had to be played with, or wound up or pushed, and they always behaved in just exactly the same way. But one day when he was playing in the Palace Garden he saw the gardener's boy amusing himself during his dinner hour by blowing bubbles with a common clay pipe, and begged to be allowed to do the same, and once having learnt he bribed the gardener's boy with his best toy engine to give him the pipe and kept his lords and ladies-in-waiting running all day for soap and water, and blew bubbles and blew bubbles and blew bubbles; until he thought and dreamt of nothing but bubbles. And the clouds and the flowers and the billowing, many-tinted robes of the Court beauties looked like bubbles. And the light of many colours on the backs of the pigeons, and the

many-tinted fish in the fountains seemed all of bubble shades.

The Lord Chamberlain, by the King's order, took away his clay pipe at night and put a gold one in its place—he had no Mother, this poor, rich little Prince. A Mother would never have done anything so silly, for of course the gold pipe did not blow half such beautiful bubbles as the one that the dear gardener's boy had given him; and he raised such a clamour that they had to give him the common old clay thing back again as the only way of quieting him, for he had always had what he wanted—or thought he wanted—and could not see why a clay pipe of all things was to be denied him.

Oddly enough he did not tire of this amusement as he had tired of all others. The more he blew bubbles the more he loved to blow them. Their smoothness and shine, the pinks and blues and greens and yellows and crystal white which they held in their enchanted spheres. The little pictures of trees and sky and castle that they mirrored never ceased to fascinate him. So that until he was quite a big boy, almost too old for lessons and quite too old for ordinary toys, the little clay pipe and a bowl of soapy water would quickly form for him a new fairy land of light and colour.

He had grown by then so clever at his favourite pursuit that it seemed no longer a childish pastime, but

more like magic; and people would flock from far and near to see the Prince blow these wonderful bubbles of his, which were greater than the Palace garden, and higher than the highest tower.

One day the Prince went out into a wide field with his little bowl of water and his pipe, so that the bubbles might not be torn against the trees and shrubs, as was so often the case in the garden.

He sat himself down in the middle of the field with his back to the sun so that all the light might play upon his bubbles, and began to blow. Twice he started, and twice the bubbles burst before they were any bigger than his head. But the third bubble grew and grew steadily. The Prince's eyes shone and his cheeks became rosy with the exertion. The people of the Court who were gathered round him moved further and further away, so as to give the great fragile globe room to expand: then further and further till they passed the bounds of the field altogether. Still the Prince blew steadily on.

At first the bubble was just green and pink and yellow and blue, as all bubbles are—reflecting the sky and the trees, the distant Palace, and the village with its red-roofed houses.

Then it began to change. Over all the surface lay the fairylike glint of rainbow colours. But with it grew a new world that was no reflection at all, just a world

of its own, with winding rivers and purple hills, and the greenest meadows ever seen, all starred over with flowers of every shade, and a beautiful castle, with a shiny roof of gold, and fluttering flags of many-coloured silks, all so lovely and so strange that suddenly the Prince felt that he could endure it no longer and, with a cry, dropped the pipe and leapt—without a thought—into the middle of the Bubble World that he had blown.

At first he was blinded and bewildered. He seemed to be in the midst of a thousand rushing, many-coloured rivers that roared over him and round him, so that he could scarcely breathe or keep his eyes unclosed, while he swayed from side to side as if he was on the deck of a ship at sea.

Then gradually sight and hearing and sense came back to him, and he found that he was actually in the Bubble World itself, as if in the middle of a vast two-sided bowl which never ceased to turn and turn. The meadows with the flowers, the river and the mountains and the trees rushed by him; and knights on horseback in shining armour, and ladies in glittering silks, and men-at-arms, and peasants—labouring in their fields amid the yellow corn; and whirling windmills and a rushing wind. Only, as he looked, did there seem to be one quiet spot, and that was in the very centre of this bewildering world, where an old, old woman sat weaving at a loom.

She was dressed in a dull brown robe and hood, the only dull colours in the whole of that Bubble World. Her long, grey hair hung in wisps on either side of her wrinkled nut-cracker face, and she was evidently too busy to thrust it aside, for her hands never ceased their work, but threw the many-coloured shuttles to and fro with incredible speed: green and yellow and blue and pink and violet, they flashed backwards and forwards in the sunlight, their silken threads streaming in all directions and seeming to weave their own way in and out of the glittering scene, as if it were only a piece of tapestry that the old woman was weaving for her own delight.

Several times the Prince tried to reach her, but the glittering, whirling world carried him by so swiftly that after each attempt he found himself too far, or not far enough, too much to the right, or too much to the left.

Then he stood still and watched and thought and realised that the whirling fairy world was turning in distinct rings, each quite separate to the other, and that he had simply to cross one, and then another and another and another, and finally take a leap from the last into the smooth green lawn where the strange old woman sat.

It took him some time, for all the circles seemed to be spinning in opposite directions, but at last he leapt

from the last ring and found himself upon the green sward where the weaving was going on.

"Be careful," cried the weaver, "or you will become entangled in the threads and there will be no further hope for you; you will just become a piece of the world's tapestry—nothing more, and of no more importance than a knot in the silk."

It was well she warned him, but even then it was no easy matter to keep clear of all the glittering threads. To dodge them, and jump them, and creep under them, until he stood just at her back, which was the only place away from the flying rainbow of silk strands.

"What shall I do to get out?" he shouted, for though all was silent, such was the effect of the flying world around him that he felt as though his voice must be carried away before it reached her ear. But the old woman shook her head impatiently. "Tut, tut!" she cried. "Speak low. Do you not see that the breath of your loud voice carries all my threads astray?"

"What shall I do to get out?" asked the Prince again, very softly this time.

"Pluck the fairest Lily that grows by the river to wear on your heart. Pass by the path of the Sun and the path of the Moon to the garden of Sleep, and then through the little Green Door, and you will be free again."

"But how can I tell which Lily is the fairest? And

where can I find the paths of the Sun and the Moon, and which way lies the garden of Sleep?"

"Nothing is to be found without seeking, and I can tell you no more."

"But——"

"But, but, but; what a word! Get away now, get away; you are tangling all my threads with the breath of your 'buts.' Away from my place of peace—away!" shrilled the old lady angrily, and threw such a shower of threads from her shuttle that the Prince was only too glad to slip away as best he could.

First to reach the river. In that many-coloured hollow world it leapt and danced and sparkled by him only a meadow or two distant, and his experience in reaching the old woman held good now. He leapt from a circle of whirling meadow land, pushed his way through a circle of young trees and ferns, paused at the edge of them, saw the river come dancing past, and leapt right on to the bank.

Once there it was easy to follow its course, and he wandered along for some time, stopping every moment to gaze at the lilies that grew along its margin, thinking each must be best, then feeling sure that there would be a better a little further on: going back a little to compare the last beauty with the one before it, but always pushing on again, certain that there must be one finer than all others still to come.

At last, round a sudden bend of the river, he found the fairest of all the fair lilies—a maiden sitting on the bank, dabbling her bare feet in the water. Her hair was yellow as the centre of a lily flower, her robe was white, her mantle green; and her face, when she lifted it to him, was surely the loveliest ever seen, for the blue sky lay in the deep pools of her eyes, which were wet with unshed tears.

The Prince asked who she was and from whence she came, and she told him how she had ever loved the Fancy better than the Fact, the Dream better than the Truth—the Reflection better than the Reality, and the Bubble World best of all; so that, like him, she too had leapt from the firm earth to this place of whirling rainbow tints, and could find no way out.

“Come!” said he bluntly, as a boy would; “I was told to pluck the fairest lily and wear it on my heart, and you I will have or no other. Will you come with me that we may together seek for the pathway back to our own world?”

So saying he held out his hands and, after gazing at him long and earnestly out of her deep blue eyes, she placed hers in them. And he drew her to him and kissed her. So, with his arm around her, and she, the fairest lily of all, with her head against his shoulder, they passed down the river brink, the Prince feeling that he

was indeed a Man, and a boy no longer, as he had been when he had taken that wild leap into the bubble.

And the river, which had been a mere stream, broadened out into a width like a sea, which tumbled and tossed in many-coloured waves round the Bubble World. And the sun began to sink low and there was the path of it across the waters; and an old man who rowed a boat adown it. And they called to him and asked him to take them in his boat; and he answered that he would if they in their turn would take him with them when they passed through the little Green Door. And, on being promised this, stopped the boat that they might climb in.

On being questioned he told them, as he rowed, that he too had loved the thought of a Bubble World, and being caught there had never got free, though he had found the boat ready moored at the river side to take him to the Garden of Sleep, where the Green Door might be found. But the river drew him this way and that and he stopped to look at the sunset, and to snare the fish and to gather the flowers on the banks. And every night he said "to-morrow," and every morrow it scarcely seemed worth while till next day, so he had let his boat drift, and the days had drifted to one large one; faster and faster, till now he was an old man. Still the hope of reaching the real world once more remained with him, and if they found the Green Door he too

would pass through it with them. But they must keep on saying, "Go on, go on. Now, now's the time. Go on," or else he could not count on himself.

And so they did, though every minute he complained he could pull the oars no longer, or that he must stop and gather flowers for the Lily Maiden. Or to-morrow would do as well. Of course he meant to take them—of course—and go himself through the Door with them; still there was no hurry, none at all.

But the Prince would not allow this, and kept him to his oars, and at times when he became very dreamy and laid them to the ruddocks and would let the boat drift, the Lily Maiden would say "Go on, go on," too. And so they kept moving, slowly, it is true, but ever moving up the river.

For, "If I take my arms from around the Maiden to row she might fall into the river," said the young Prince to himself, which was ridiculous, because she was almost a grown woman, not a child at all. But because it was a reason he liked he thought it was a very good reason against him taking the oars from that slow, uncertain old man, and rowing in his place.

After what seemed a long time to the old man, the sun set. And the moon rose where it set, making a path that led straight back whence they had come, so it seemed. Then the old man put down his oars; for what

was the good of going back again just the very way they had come?

"She said down the path of the moon," remarked the Prince very decidedly, for how right that old woman had been about the fairest Lily. "She said down the path of the moon. So go back."

"I won't," said the old man.

"But you will," said the Prince, and he did. And so strange a world it was and so quickly did it turn and twist that none of the scenes on either side of the river as they passed back were in the least like what they had been as they came, and indeed they had not gone very far on their return journey—if it were possible to return where they had never been before—when the river ended abruptly and a great fairylike Palace fronted them with many towers and fluttering flags which streamed out gaily in the greyey, pinky golden dawn which spread as the Moon sank behind the Palace roof.

There were some steps down to the water and at the bottom of these the old man fastened his boat and the three mounted together to the Terrace of the Palace.

Two great peacocks sat on the balustrade at either side of the top of the steps, with their tails streaming, but their eyes were shut and they did not move.

In the great hall with its hundred of mirrors, to which they passed from the Terrace, there were many,

many people standing in groups, or sitting on the golden chairs and sofas. The ladies were fluttering their fans—or had just fluttered them, for they were still. The gentlemen were bowing or talking—or had just been doing so, for their fingers were at their snuff-boxes or their mouths open, as if to speak. But they none of them moved. They were all asleep like the peacocks, only the silken gowns of the ladies rustled and stirred a little with the wind that is never still in the Bubble World.

The maiden and the Prince and the old man passed through the great hall, through the banqueting room, where some guests still lingered over their wine, with their fingers on the stems of the glasses; through the serving rooms, where the butler and men-servants had their hands raised above the dishes of fruit they were arranging—or had been arranging; through the kitchen, where the cook was basting the meat, which must have just stopped turning in front of the fire that had just gone out, and where the scullion was beating a boy who must have just broken a plate; and through the dairy where the dairy-maid must have just stopped turning the churn; and out to the stables, where the grooms had just been grooming their horses, and the stable boys washing the carriages, and the fat coachman smoking his pipe. Where everybody must have just been doing something but then was doing nothing,

for though their hands were all raised above their work they were all, every single one of them, fast asleep.

All—well, not quite, quite all, for on the mounting block in the stable yard sat a cat and she—yes, she had not been but, was—was—yes, actually was at that very moment, washing her face with her paws.

“It’s *alive!*” cried the Prince.

“It’s *moving!*” cried the old man.

“It’s *awake!*” cried the Lily Maiden. “See its dear green eyes.”

“Yes,” said the cat.

They all started and looked at each other, for neither in his Father’s kingdom, nor in her Father’s kingdom (for she, too, was the only child of a King), nor in the old boatman’s cottage had a cat ever been heard to speak, even one word. And now it spoke another, for it said, “Well?”

And the word was so much of a question and so much more of a reminder of their bad manners in standing there staring at her, that they all begged her pardon at once.

“Don’t mention it,” replied the cat; “I suppose it is natural that you should be wondering why I only am awake in this world of sleep.”

“Tell us,” they cried; “do, do tell us——”

“Well,” said the cat, stretching herself with great deliberation, “it was like this. They lived in the world,

and they were not content with the world as it was, and they pretended this, and pretended that, and wished for this and wished for that, till they built a Bubble World of what was not real round what was real—the palace, the gardens, and their own lives. When I say ‘they built’ I mean they started it, for the old woman with the loom only took the threads and wove them round everyone and everything and set the bubble spinning. But having got a world of their own they were not even then contented, but were always wishing it would all stop. All the morning they wished it were afternoon, and all the afternoon they wished it were evening, and all the evening they wished it were morning again. And the horses wished their hay were oats, and their oats hay; and their winter coats summer, and their summer coats winter. Even the rats wished they were cats and the mice wished they were rats. And the flowers in the garden wished they were fruit trees, and the fruit trees were tired of bearing fruit, and wished they were just flowers. Till at last the old woman at the loom got impatient and as they had yawned and yawned so much, let them all just yawn themselves to sleep.”

“And you?” asked the Prince.

“Well, there were mice and sunshine and milk; and it was pleasant enough being a cat. *I* was contented, so she left me as I was; and there are sleeping mice

enough left to last my life time, and no trouble to catch them."

"But we want to get out," said the Prince.

"Well," answered the cat, "there is the little Green Door, you know. It is easy enough; they could have all done the same, but they did not know what they wanted. I will show you the way if you really wish it."

And as they did wish it, very much indeed, she trotted off in front and the Prince and the Lily Maiden and the old man followed. Through the stable yard, down a path shaded with trees, through a rose garden, down another path on either side of which drooped Larkspurs and Lilies, Stocks and Sweetpeas, Love-in-a-Mist and Sweet William to a high thick hedge of box, deep in which was embowered a little Green Door.

You must remember that—though they had in some measure become accustomed to the strangeness of the Bubble World—it still twisted and spun around with its mist of many-tinted light and colour and its rushing breezes, while it was only when they moved with it that it seemed at all still.

Even as the Prince put out his hand to push open the little Green Door, they and the box hedge and the door itself were all rushing along at a great speed.

But as his hand pressed against the wood and the door swung slowly back, there was a change.

First a hundred thousand brilliantly coloured bub-

bles seemed to burst in the air, and a hundred thousand winds seemed to rush by them with millions of silken threads of every hue floating on them.

Then suddenly all was quiet—not quite silent, for a thrush had begun to sing in a bush near by—but still and peaceful as in the real world.

And the flowers lifted their heads and more birds began to sing. And people came out of the palace, and down the terrace steps to the garden. And someone in the house rang a bell, and someone began to sing. And then a dog barked, and there was the sound of a child laughing; yet it all seemed very quiet for all that, after the tremendous whirl that Bubble World had been in.

For as the Prince opened the little Green Door the Bubble had burst, and he and the Lily Maiden and the old man passed out of it into the world beyond, for there was no barrier of bubble walls left. And the old man went back to his wife and the children, who had all grown old waiting for him.

But the Prince and the Maiden, with their arms entwined, went away across the meadows to his Father's Court, where they lived all their lives in a world that was real and true and beautiful.

And the cat, too? Oh, of course.



THE BOY WHO WENT OGRE
SHOOTING



He just lifted his gun to his shoulders



THE BOY WHO WENT OGRE SHOOTING

THERE was once a boy who stole his Father's gun one fine day and set out ogre shooting—for it was at a time and in a place where ogres were strong and terrible and many in number; and the boy, though small, not much bigger than you are, was very brave.

Now there was also an ogre boy, he was only about as old as you are, too, but he was, oh, how much bigger; quite tremendously big! And oh, how ugly! His head looked like nothing so much as a big apple pudding, all loose and saggy from not having enough apples inside it, made by a nasty cook, you know.

Now the same day that the little boy went out with his father's gun to shoot ogres—very brave—the old ogre sent his boy to the nearest town to buy him a ton or so of tobacco, and a hundred or so boxes of matches. And the young ogre was going one way—like this \ and the boy was going the same way, like that / and they both went on and on, till they nearly ran into each other.

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The boy was not in the least frightened; he just lifted his gun to his shoulder and was going to pull the trigger and blow that apple-pudding-without-the-apples-looking head right off the young ogre's shoulders. Then, a great yawning cavern seemed to open right across the middle of it—snip, snap, went a great pair of jaws, and he was slipping and sliding down the ogre's red lane before he had time even to scream; for the young ogre had been sent off to town before his breakfast, that his father might be sure he would come back as quickly as possible, so that he did not stop to chew his food, as every good little boy, ogreish or otherwise, ought to do, and in the end he lost his life—just through that fatal want of manners and mastication, as many a boy has done before him.

Well, he went on his way feeling very much better and not hurrying quite so much, and not caring in the least how terribly joggled and jolted about the little boy was down at the end of his red lane.

He soon reached the town, and he bought the tobacco and the matches and several other little things that his mother had told him to buy; for even ogres have mothers, though this one's mother could not have been up to much or she would have taught him Manners (with a big M please, Mr. Printer, none of your silly little m's for an important word like that).

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Because the ogre's son bought so much at a time, and paid for it, too, the man in the shop gave him a lolly stick, just a few yards long, as a sort of present; the sort that means "I'll give to you and you'll give to me."

If the ogre's son had been really well brought up he would not have thought of eating lollies before his proper breakfast—the boy scarcely counted, you see. But he had not been brought up as he should have been, and directly he was out of the shop he started to suck and chew till every bit of the lolly stick was gone—and very uncomfortable for the little boy it was too.

But it had stuck almost as uncomfortably in the young ogre's teeth, and what do you think he began to do? It was so dreadfully, so horribly, so terribly vulgar that really I am ashamed to tell you. Shall I? No-o-o. Well, yes, I suppose I must, as the whole of what happened afterwards was the result of it. He began to pick his teeth with a match! There!

And he swallowed it—there!

And as he trotted on it went joggling up and down in his tum-tum with the boy and the gun until it struck itself and set fire to the cartridges in the boy's pocket—and there was such an explosion as never, never was.

And the giant was blown to atoms—the tiniest, teeni-

est little bits. And the boy was shot up into the air, up, up, up, till he bumped his head against the sky, and then he shot down again—down, down, down, till he would have been dashed to pieces if he had not happened to drop right into the nest of a giant Cocky-oly bird on the top of a high tree.

Mrs. Cocky-oly, who was sitting there with all her children, and Mr. Cocky-oly, who was on a bough quite near, were very much annoyed; very much indeed.

"I like my friends to drop in now and then," said Mrs. Cocky-oly, "but not quite like this."

"It is unwarrantable," said Mr. Cocky. (It's a long word and does not mean much. I put it to show that I can spell—it wasn't there when I merely told the story.)

"Pray excuse me," said the boy very politely. "I am sorry to intrude."

"Don't mention it," said Mrs. Cocky very scornfully, while the little Olys kept fidgeting from one foot to another to try and find a toe that had not been trodden on.

"But I have been so shocked," continued the boy, "and it was all so sudden and unexpected that really ——" And then he told them all about it, and they agreed it must have been a shocker indeed, and were quite good tempered and nice, so that they parted like

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old friends and even helped the boy down the tree—so that he went home not the very least bit the worse.

But he has never really liked sticky lolly sticks since. One may have too much of even a good thing.







